

The First United Methodist Church of Lowell Tele-Christian January 2024 Edition

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to
make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Mark's Remarks...



We are approaching a New Year. Where did 2023 go? I always take the opportunity of a new year to express my gratitude to the church where I am serving. I've told you from the pulpit before, but you are an amazing group of people. I am so grateful to be able to serve as your pastor. Thank you for having me. If anyone feels I have slighted them or ignored them, please accept my sincere apology. I will never say or do anything to purposefully offend someone. If I have it was unintentional. Please talk to me about it and let's iron it out. I take it seriously to serve the Lord by serving you.

Getting back to your incredibleness. (Is that even a word?) This church, more than any I have served has disparate political views. There are some leaning pretty hard left and some that are very far right. Despite this you can work and play together without political warfare breaking out. Thank you. You work hard together to accomplish some amazing things; Winterfest, College boxes, shoebox ministry, Harvest Dinner, Kids Karnival, VBS. These are just a few big things you've done in the last 6 months. Thank you for your willingness to work together. This appreciation is not just for the work on the big visible things. Many work hard behind the scenes, paying the bills, recording information, cleaning up messes, preparing the sanctuary for worship, making phone calls, buying supplies. I could go on and on. Thank you to all who don't get a thank you and yet the work continues to get done.

Thank you for the home you provide for your pastors and their families. It is a beautiful home that you should be proud of. I appreciate the pride you take in maintaining what is entrusted to you. If there are any issues at the parsonage, the Trustees are quick to respond. My family and I are comfortable and feel well cared for. Thank you.

I also want to thank you for my salary package. I am satisfied with what you are able to do. You are generous. It may be inappropriate to talk about money, but the fact is we all need money to provide for ourselves and our family. I want to thank you for providing that aspect of life so that I can serve you.

Thank you for being you. Thank you God for putting me here with you!

Pastor Mark



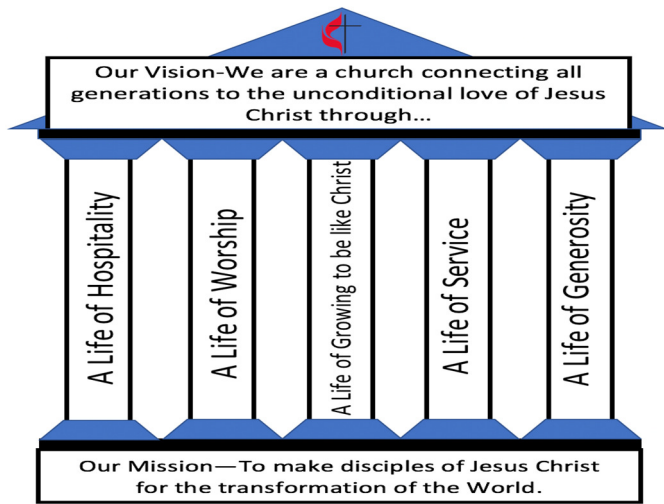
Sermons for January

In January we will have a sermon series on Epiphany.
Each week we will explore how Jesus is revealed in different aspects to the world.



January Sermon Title and Scripture Schedule

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| January 7 ~ Scripture: Ephesians 3:3-6 | Sermon Title: <i>'Christ Revealed'</i> |
| January 14 ~ Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:12-14 | Sermon Title: <i>'Christ Revealed in You'</i> |
| January 21 ~ Scripture: Mark 1:14-20 | Sermon Title: <i>'Christ Revealed in His Call'</i> |
| January 28 ~ Scripture: Mark 1:21-28 | Sermon Title: <i>'Christ Revealed to the Spiritual'</i> |



This image represents our church. It is built on the Mission to make disciples for Jesus, sheltered by a Vision of unconditional love for all, and supported by five Pillars of Discipleship: HOSPITALITY, WORSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, SERVICE, and GENEROSITY.



Look for this small image of a pillar throughout this newsletter. A small pillar image means the article relates to one of our Pillars of Discipleship. It means the article tells you how we are moving toward achieving our Mission and working at keeping our church relevant and alive for future generations.



One Worship Service

You may have been occupied on the last two Sundays of December. Don't forget, we have one worship service that will meet at 9:30 am now. Children's Sunday School will continue to meet during the worship time. Adult Sunday School will meet at 8:15 am. In the summer we'll still have an 8 am service in the park. More information on that summer service will come later.



Thank you to all who helped 'Hang the Greens' on December 1. The church looked beautiful during the Christmas season. We will meet on Friday, January 5 at 9:00 am to 'Un'-decorate the church. All are invited to help with taking the decorations down.



Where He Leads Us

The new service time is under our belt now. We generally do not like change. But if God is leading us to change, we will hopefully take on the challenge. The Administrative Council is tasked with listening for God's leading. Whatever further changes and calling God places on us, our response will hopefully be: Where He leads us, we will follow. This theme is based on the hymn Where He Leads Me by Ernest W. Blandly. The chorus is:

Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow.
Where He leads me I will follow; I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.

It is based on the scripture "If anyone would come after me, he must... take up his cross and follow Me." (Mark 8:34). The future is going to be an adventure for us.



Martha's Coffee House = Fellowship, Hospitality, and Relationships

With the change in our Sunday worship time to one service at 9:30, our Martha's Coffee House hours will also change slightly. At the suggestion of the Worship Team, we plan to have Martha's begin at 9:00 AM, or ½ hour before the service. We will also offer our Martha's fellowship time for ½ hour after the service.

As our church family comes back together in one service, we will enjoy seeing our 'old friends' who worshipped at a different time. It will be nice to greet them with "a smile and a wave" in the sanctuary, but it will be even better to have the opportunity to reconnect through conversation as we gather together at Martha's. We will also likely see faces that are new to us. We will be able to meet these folks who by stopping in the library to introduce ourselves. Martha's Coffee House is not just about treats and fellowship. It is about hospitality and building relationships within our church family.

A note to those attending the adult discussion classes at 8:15 AM: You will need to bring your own coffee from home in a travel mug, or visit the Keurig machine in the Fellowship Hall prior to class. After class you will have time to partake in the Martha's treats and fellowship before the 9:30 service begins and/or stay after.



LYFT is our Thursday evening worship service. We start at 5:30 pm with dinner and go right into worship at 6 pm. Worship includes music, a lay speaker or Pastor Mark speaking, prayer and ends with communion. LYFT is a casual worship service where we look forward each week to food, fellowship and fun! Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend!

LYFT gets transformed into Messy Church on the fourth Thursday of each month. Do you know what 'Messy Church' is? We really don't get dirty or messy, it is just another way to say that we are doing church a little differently than normal. We start out as usual with dinner. After dinner, Pastor Mark divides us into 4 groups. The size of the groups depends on how many people are at LYFT that night, but it is usually around 6 per group. There is no communion or speaker on 'Messy Church' night. Try it you might like it!

The four stations that we have at 'Messy Church' are:

1. Dessert station
2. Craft or Mission station
3. Discussion station (with Pastor Mark)
4. Game station



NEWS FROM THE HOUSEHOLD PANTRY

Julie Donovan, Chairperson

2023...What a year!! The pantry remained open CURBSIDE every month in 2023. We served an average of 53 families each month, with May being our lowest month serving 35 families and March being our highest month serving 62 families. We distributed 635 packed bags in 2023. We were able to supply our families with laundry detergent, dish soap, household cleaner, paper towel, facial tissue, toilet paper, bar soap, deodorant, toothpaste/toothbrush, and shampoo/conditioner in a prepackaged bag each month. Feminine hygiene products and diapers were available upon request.

Our total cost for the Household Pantry for 2023 was \$6,162.07. It cost about \$514.00 a month to keep our pantry going. We continued to work in partnership with the Lowell Family Dollar and the St. John Dollar Tree. Please thank Rachel at Family Dollar and Gail at Dollar Tree next time you're there!

Our pantry was blessed with donations from Hawthorne Arbor Gleaner, Indian Trail Grange, Rotary Club, Avery Dennison, Strack's (paper bags), a special couple who donated 6 Aldi Gift cards to 6 families in need, along with many monetary donations within and outside the church. How fortunate the Household Pantry is to be remembered by so many thoughtful people! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

We head into 2024 with a dedicated staff of compassionate servants whose hearts lie in serving those in our community who need assistance. We are humbled to be able to serve these families. We could not keep this pantry going without tall of you!

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US BE ABLE TO SERVE NEEDY FAMILIES IN THE TRI-CREEK AREA.



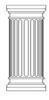
Christmas Clothesline Update

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Christmas Clothesline!! Forty seven packages, covered in love and prayers, were delivered to the three elementary schools.

The schools are always so very grateful to our church and it's members for the support we give to their families!!

Have a wonderful New Year!

Susan Wells
Missions Chairperson



Congregational Care Provides Opportunities to Serve Others

Bev Kussy & Pam Nelson, Co- Chairs

Caring Contacts: Three years ago, Covid prevented us from visiting those unable to attend worship. So, we started this “adopt a shut-in” ministry. We reach out to those members living in facilities or confined at home through a card delivered by USPS once a month. We write a few lines to personalize the card and let the person know our church has not forgotten them. Covid is still around, as is the Flu and RSV currently, so this ministry remains a safe way to connect with our shut-ins. Anyone can do this ministry. Just let the office know so we can match you with a shut-in.

Milestone Birthdays: This ministry sends a card that has been signed by the church family to members when they reach a special birthday. We designate 75, 80, 85, 90 & up as ‘milestones’. The office provides the data. The cards are set out in the narthex the first Sunday of each month. We are in need of a person to organize and set out the cards once a month and see that they are mailed. Please call the office if you are willing to do this.

Martha’s Coffee House: This time of fellowship on Sundays is place to welcome visitors and get to know other members. While Congregational Care provides the coffee and other supplies, we ask for help from the church family to donate a few treats (store bought or homemade) and your time to serve as a host. A signup sheet is available on the serving table in the library each Sunday. A half sheet explaining what a volunteer host does is also available on the table. Please consider asking a friend, or a new person, to join you in taking a turn to host. Hosting does not interfere with attending worship.

Prayer Chain: We keep our church family and others covered in prayer when a crisis or health issue arises. The request for prayer is sent out by email and you simply offer prayer for the person & concern from the privacy of your home. If you want to pray for others in their time of need, contact the office, Kathy Nelson (219-789-5914) or Beth Bales (219-775-0916) to be added to the chain.

Prayer Blankets: We offer handmade lap robes or blankets to those in need of feeling wrapped in God’s love. These lap robes and blankets are crocheted, knitted, or made from fleece and donated by members. Donors drop blankets off in the container by the office door. A tag with a message and prayer is added to each blanket, then it is placed in a plastic tub in the library. Blankets may be taken by anyone to a person in need. A sign out sheet is available to avoid duplication. We are in need of a person to keep track of the blanket inventory, add the tags, and oversee the display of blankets in the library. Please let the office know if you are willing to do this.

We want to say THANK YOU to those who have been donating cards for us to send to those who are ill, or have lost a loved one. The donations have been GREAT and have helped keep expenses down for our Caring Cards ministry. There is a blue plastic basket in the library where card donations may be dropped off. As you can see, we have many ministries of caring that provide opportunities for you to serve others. None require attendance at meetings. We welcome the involvement of as many of our church family as possible.



THANK YOU!

"I want to thank all the people at First Church who opened their hearts and showered me and my family with their condolences and expressions of sympathy at John’s passing, a true testimony to how wonderful and welcoming our Church family is. Please forgive me if I have failed to thank you or acknowledge you in any way. I am truly thankful to each and every one of you for your outpouring of love, encouragement and understanding during this time. A special shout-out to the ladies who fed us-- not only physically but spiritually--before and after the service. Thank you, again, from the bottom of my heart. Kim Westerfield"

I want to Thank everyone for your Prayers for Baby Cayden. He now has a tracheotomy tube and is being fed through his belly button. He is doing well as of now. Praying he keeps improving. Ethel Devine

Dear Methodist Church,
Thank you for the finals treat box. I really liked it!
Kyle Simmons

To Everyone at the LYFT Service,
Thank you so much for my sweet card and bag of treats for being person of the week. I was surprised!
Amy Nichols

Dear Lowell Methodist Church,
Thank you for your generous Clothesline donations in support of our Three Creeks students and families in need. I hope you have received joy in your hearts through the spirit of giving this holiday season.
Christa M. Werling



I'm the church mouse. I see all that goes on in the church and I love to gossip about it. Of course being a Christian mouse, I only say positive things.

Our children and youth did a great job at the Children's pageant. I always love to hear the patter of children's feet about. I also heard that the youth group was over at Cedar Creek caroling. They could have come to the church and sung to a poor mouse, but I'm very glad they took care of our older members.

Did you hear the Cantata this year? The Chancel Choir did an amazing job. I don't know how Bobbie Sue Whaley gets that much sound out of them. I was truly moved by their ministry.

A whole crew of folks decorated the church, inside and out. Wow, it sure is pretty around my home now. Candy Johnson and Elaine DeVine have kept the candles full of oil and our poinsettias watered.

Be careful when you do good work for the church. I'm watching and just waiting to share that gossip.



Young at Heart Sr. Bingo will be back in January. On January 23 we'll meet at 1 pm. There will be snacks, prizes for the winners and many games of Bingo all for no charge to you. Invite friends. We don't card folk, so anyone of any age can come. See you in January.



Pastor's Comic Corner

In case you haven't noticed, I love humor. Below are comics that I've come across. Enjoy and smile! Pastor Mark



THIS YEAR, FOR NEW YEARS, I AM RESOLVING TO DO ALL SORTS OF BAD THINGS SINCE I NEVER EVER STICK TO MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

THIS YEAR MY RESOLUTION IS TO BE A BETTER PERSON IN EVERY RESPECT



WHERE POSSIBLE I AM PLANNING TO DO THIS FROM THE COMFORT OF MY ARMCHAIR

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday - Worship ~ 9:30 a.m. (in Sanctuary), **Monday/Tuesday - A/A** 12 p.m. (303) **Wednesday - A/A** - 8 p.m. (Fellowship Hall), **Al/Anon** - 8 p.m. (library) **Thursday - Dulcimers** 10 am (303), **Godsbells practice** 4:30 pm (balcony), **LYFT Dinner** 5:30 pm **Worship** 6:00 pm (Fellowship Hall), **Chancel Choir** 7 p.m. (Sanctuary) **Saturday - A/A** 11 a.m. (303)

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <i>Happy New Year!</i> <i>Office Closed</i>	2	3	4	5 <i>Take Down Christmas Decorations 9 am</i>	6
7	8 <i>Women's Bible Study 3 pm</i> <i>Tri-Kappa 6 pm (FH)</i>	9	10 <i>Shift Meeting 5 pm (304)</i> <i>Worship Meeting 6 pm</i>	11	12 <i>Congregational Care Meeting 1 pm (library)</i>	13
14 <i>Youth Group 5:30 pm (303)</i>	15 <i>Women's Bible Study 3 pm</i>	16	17 <i>Finance Meeting 5:30 pm (FH)</i>	18	19	20
21	22 <i>Women's Bible Study 3 pm</i> <i>Ad-Council 6 pm (FH)</i>	23 <i>Senior Bingo 1pm (FH)</i>	24	25 <i>Messy Church @ LYFT</i>	26	27
28	29 <i>Women's Bible Study 3 pm</i>	30	31			