



THE GOOD NEWS

Lake Gibson United Methodist Church



*To be a joyful church family that is crucial
to our community*

From the Pastor

Happy New Year 2021

I am quite sure most of us are glad to put 2020 behind us and we look forward to better days ahead. For all the problems we have had in the past year God has been good and faithful to his people and the church. Even within this pandemic there are lessons we can learn. I ask you to think with me through this and ask you to seriously consider these observations I make.

Many churches blame COVID-19 for the problems they have and their lack of growth, but is this true. In reality all COVID-19 did to us was make us cancel our in-person worship services. We could not meet for fear of exposing others and ourselves to the virus, but is worship all the church is about? It should not be.

There are 5 things that I think should be occurring in a healthy church. Here they are: 1) Worship, 2) Ministry, 3) Mission, 4) Fellowship and 5) Discipleship. Our corporate worship has been impacted by the pandemic, but even there we have moved to online worship and actually increased the number of people we impact each week.

We are still ministering to people, maybe even more so through our Food Pantry, Jerusalem Fund, Hope House, Salvation Army, Lighthouse Ministries, United Methodist Children's Home and many other local organizations. Our Mission has not stopped. We are still called to be a light to our community and to influence people for Jesus Christ. Perhaps we can be that light and influence when there is darkness in the world or in people's lives better than we can when everything is going well.

Maybe as Mordecai told Esther – we were born for such a time as this! Born to be the light and salt in such a time as 2020. Wow! How have you done in fulfilling that role? Since we can't meet on campus, fellowship is limited but we can still stay in touch with each other through our phones, e-mail, newsletters, Facebook, other social apps, Zoom and the old-time art of sending cards and letters.

Discipleship continues; it goes on as we learn, grow, meditate and practice our faith. We do that every day as we walk in this day and age. We have so many resources in our books, through television, tapes, CDs, Netflix, downloads, Zoom and the internet that there is no excuse for us not to grow in Discipleship.

So if you think your church is closed – maybe you should examine what you think church is and where you fit in. Perhaps you need to expand your role in the church. Even if Lake Gibson cannot hold in-person services, we are still doing the other four things and worshipping on the web. God's church is alive and well – thanks be to God!!!

Pastor Steve

Date**January Events (as of 12/30/20)**

- 4 Board of Trustees meeting, 2:00 pm in the Sanctuary
- 7 Bible study with Pastor Steve via Zoom, 1:00 pm, repeating every Thursday. Call the office to register if you are joining for the first time. Today's scripture is I Corinthians chapter 9.
- 7 **Still in Mission** video conference, 1:00 pm; repeats monthly, registration required, see article). To see a catalog of missionaries go to <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nUtFVVC6Ezqt460KOOcKjdG44PcAPM6w/view?usp=sharing> .
- 7 United Methodist Women *Faith Talks* podcast, 2:00 pm. Faith Talks are monthly conversations with United Methodist Women exploring themes and resources that empower us to put faith, hope, and love into action. To register go to <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org>. To listen to previous Faith Talks podcasts, go to <https://www.spreaker.com/show/umw-faith-talks>.
- 9 United Methodist Men monthly meeting, 9:00 am, with breakfast, in the Family Life Center.
- 10 Justice League (Ending Racism), Zoom video conference, every Sunday at 6:00 pm, led by First UMC Lakeland, open to everyone. Call Phyllis Kitchens to register (863-984-4564).
- 10 New Anti-Racism Program: Methodists Must Challenge Racism, Sundays, 6:00 to 7:30 pm, 10 Jan - 14 Feb via Zoom. To register go to www.anona.com/adultgroups. Participant book (\$10), *Holding Up Your Corner* by Pastor F. Willis Johnson, is available from amazon.com, abingdonpress.com or christianbook.com. (See article for more information.)
- 16 United Methodist Women video conference, Part 3: Becoming an Advocate for Change (ending the school-to-prison pipeline). Registration information to be provided.
- 17 Human Relations Day (Special Sunday with Offering)

Prayer Ministry

Happy New Year from Prayer Ministry

Welcome, Prayer Warriors, to a New Year of praying for others as Christians in faith and service to our God.

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks." 1 Timothy 2:1 (NKV)

We give thanks to our prayer warriors for being dedicated to God's calling to "Pray for one another". We have been blessed this past year with the addition of new email prayer warriors. We currently have **50 prayer warriors**. Receiving prayer needs through email during the week is a blessing to those who need extra prayers. The Prayer Journal is currently being sent, via email, to all Prayer Warriors once a month as it is updated.

Please call the church office if you would like to join our Prayer Ministry (863-858-5431).

We give thanks to God for calling us to be people of prayer. God Bless our prayer mission and Happy New Year to everyone.

Prayer Ministry - Fran

Thank You From Cornerstone Family Ministries (Excerpts from CFM Email)

We are GRATEFUL for each volunteer, donor and prayer partner who supported the work of Cornerstone Family Ministries during these challenging times, and we have HOPE because of your faithfulness.

We are GRATEFUL for financial and in-kind support that made it possible for us to come alongside nearly 15,000 children and 172 child-care centers at a time when they needed us more than ever, and we have HOPE for the resources to serve many more in 2021.

We are GRATEFUL for over 3,000,000 nutritious meals served, nearly 100 early learning scholarships for children attending our Rosa Continued . . .

Thanks from Cornerstone, Continued

Valdez Early Learning Center and Lab School, and for over 10,000 donated masks and thousands of donated books that we were able to distribute to children and teachers throughout our network of childcare centers.

Thank you for helping us do God's work -- You give the Children and Families we serve HOPE!

Cathy C. Stone, Executive Director

Thanks from the Children's Home

Your generosity is greatly appreciated by the Florida United Methodist Children's Home (FUMCH) this Christmas season. Lake Gibson UMC donated a total of **\$1,970** (\$300 more than reported in the December newsletter) in gift cards.

Thank you all for your continued support of FUMCH and its essential mission to help children in need.

United Methodist Men (UMM) Meeting, Saturday, January 9th

The UMM will hold its first meeting of 2021 on Saturday, January 9th, at 9:00 am in the Family Life Center. A light breakfast will be served.

We hope that men who attend Lake Gibson UMC will come to this meeting to learn about UMM and join this Christian service group which helps the church and neighbors in various ways throughout the year.

Michael Moake

People Still Needed to Pick Up Publix Bread

We need people to pick up the donated Publix bread Wednesday and **Saturday nights**. Task includes marking out price labels on each item. So far, Lynn Meske has volunteered for Wednesday nights when she is in Florida.

These bread donations are a key part of the blessings provided during our Thursday food pantry and Sunday morning pickup in the FLC.

If you have a heart for feeding the hungry, please call Debbie Moore at 863-614-7193.

Learn about the Work of Our Missionaries in Monthly Webinars

The Missionary Support Team of the United Methodist Church will host monthly video conferences presenting the work of our missionaries. The first one for 2021 will be on **January 7th at 1:00 pm EST**. More information about UMC missionaries is available on the website shown on page 2, Still in Mission (Jan 7).

Featured speakers are:

[Andrew Fleming](#), who is serving as the Assistant Chaplain with Metropolitan Ministries in the United States.

[German Gomez](#) is serving as the Pastor with San Juan Ministries in the United States.

[Mbwizu Ndjungu](#) is serving as the Christian Education Ministry Coordinator with the Methodist Church in Belize (formerly British Honduras).

[Jae Choi](#) is serving as the Missionary in Residence with Global Ministries in the United States.

[To register, click here.](#) Registration is required. If you cannot make it, do not despair; the missionary presentations will be recorded.

We cannot wait to experience the surprising movement of The Spirit through our Methodist Missionaries over the coming year! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Missionary Support Team, (itin@umcmision.org).

CROP Hunger Walk Will Be Virtual

In a normal year, CROP Walk would be scheduled for the last Sunday in February. This year it will be virtual, with volunteers assembling their own teams, raising funds and walking (if desired) when and wherever they choose.

This event raises money for Church World Service to fight hunger in the US and around the world. One-quarter of the monies raised in the Lakeland area will be donated to local charities that fight hunger.

Continued . . .

CROP Hunger Walk, Continued

If you want to register your team, go to <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/lakelandfl>. Be patient, the site takes a while to open.

Last year LGUMC raised \$455.00 and we've been challenged to try to increase this. Donation checks should be made out to Lake Gibson UMC with an annotation CROP Walk. Cash donations should also be marked for CROP Walk. Drop off your donations in the office Monday - Thursday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, or place in the collection plate on Sunday. You can also donate electronically -- see information on our web site, lakegibsonumc.com.

Digital Media for Ministry Course

United Methodist Communications is offering this course for free. The following information was provided: "In this course, we will examine the best ways to reach people using digital media. This course includes interactive features to help you engage with the material. In addition, we recommend getting a pad and a pen for taking notes."

As 2020 has clearly demonstrated, the use of digital media is critical to the success of our church and all its missions. If you're interested in checking out this self-paced course, go to

<https://rise.articulate.com/share/eidIP5SGMh5o0zVdrX1FtMMKCbG2ZxdC#/>

Progress Report: Sanctuary Upgrades

As of December 25th, 2020

1. Moved the organ to the choir room. It can be set up almost anywhere in the sanctuary or FLC in about an hour's time. We have set it on dollies for easy moving.
2. Moved the drums down one level and to stage right to get away from center of stage and provide better coordination with band.
3. Set up new floodlights on Advent candles for season. The picture shows how it looked. Chairs and stands can be added for choir practice and Sunday worship as needed.

Continued on the next page . . .

Progress Report: Sanctuary Upgrades, Continued

4. Set up chairs on stage compliant with CDC distancing guidance.
5. New power plugs and microphone stage boxes were added to stage floor to reduce number wires and cables lying across stage. This improves appearance and reduces tripping hazard.
6. The overhead hanging lighting was reconnected so it now can be controlled and dimmed from sound booth.
7. The installation of the new sound system is complete except for new main speakers that will be installed after the first of the year.
8. After the first of the year, a demo will be set up with flood lights on stage to see if that helps the choir see their music.
9. The fluorescent cove lighting in the sanctuary has been replaced with LED type bulbs.
10. The assisted hearing system is in operation for anyone to use.

Bob Siegel - Trustee



Special Sundays with Offerings

And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16 (NAS)

Human Relations Day is January 17th, 2021. Not long ago the world watched as a police officer placed his knees for 8 minutes and 46 seconds on an unarmed African American man while he pleaded for his life. He later died from the knee that was placed on his neck.

The United Methodist Church's response was swift. The headline on umcmmission.org read "Standing against racial injustice: Global Ministries offers grants through the United Methodist Continued . . .

Special Sundays with Offerings, Continued

Voluntary Services program." The grants funded by the annual **Human Relations Day (HRD) collection** were offered to United Methodist annual conferences to provide resources for peaceful demonstrations, food, access to medication, and rebuilding efforts for communities impacted negatively.

Human Relations Day calls United Methodists to recognize the right of all God's children to realize their full potential as human beings and in relationship with one another. This special offering benefits neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services and works with at-risk teens through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program.

Thank you for your generous gifts to the Human Relations Day offering. Without your gifts, we would be unable to respond to these needs. Prepare now to celebrate this **Special Sunday with offering** on the Sunday before Martin Luther King's birthday, or on a day that works with your church's schedule. [Source: United Methodist Communications]

Special Sundays with Offerings for 2021

Human Relations Sunday	January 1
United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Sunday	March 14th
Native American Ministries Sunday	April 18th
Peace with Justice Sunday	May 30th
World Communion Sunday	October 3rd
United Methodist Student Day	November 28th

United Methodist Women Christmas Fund-Raiser

The Gulf Central District UMW held a Christmas event virtually to introduce Ms. Alice Garrick's work with Pakistani and other South Asian women. Items made by these ladies were Continued on the next page . . .

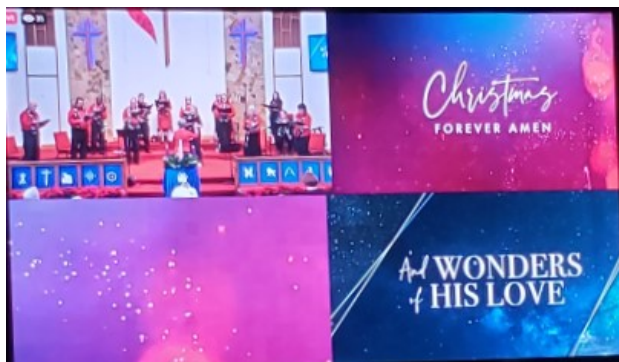
United Methodist Women Christmas Fund-Raiser, Continued

offered for sale with the money going to help them have a dignified way to support their families, as opposed to home-based prostitution, selling one of their kidneys or other types of human trafficking.

In total, **\$2,900.00** was raised for Ms. Garrick's mission! (Money raised was from the after-Thanksgiving sale, the Christmas event sale and individuals' donations.)

Our Christmas Cantata on December 20th

[Photos taken from LGUMC's streaming worship



service]



Bob Willome, Jay Ellis, Beverly Hines and Beverly Ellis



Cyndi Kuhlman and Fay Herrick

Cantata, Continued



Cantata choir:

Eric Hines, Bob Herrick, Bill Anderson, Bob Willome, Jay Ellis, Bev Ellis, Bev Hines (conductor), Linda Gibbs, Cyndi Kuhlman, Rochelle McBride, Fay Herrick, Jonelle Nance, Brenda Hess-Warner, Barbara Allen-Coil and Dorothy Burns.

Music Director, Glenda Hess, could not attend the performance, so Bev Hines conducted/

Contact Information

Pastor Steve Polk, 863-858-5431; fax 863-853-1625; pastor@lakegibsonumc.com

Kristie Otte, Administrative Secretary, 863-858-5431, office@lakegibsonumc.com

Office Hours: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday thru Thursday

Sue Heishman, Bookkeeper

Debbie Moore, Custodian

Glenda Grant Hess, Music Director

Latisha Cook, Director of A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center, 863-858-8400.

Kristie Otte, Lexie Otte, Dave McPherson, Bob Siegel and Justin Oliva, Audio/Visual Team

Florida United Methodist Children's Home (FUMCH)

The children and adults at FUMCH kept busy during the Christmas season as they continued to follow COVID-19 health guidelines. Below are some photos and captions from their Facebook page.

Our youth watching Christmas movies that our Recreation Department set up this morning in the gym. They have their new "pets" as well - stuffed animals donated by PetSmart in Lake Mary. (Dec 24th)



Our youth recreated the Christmas story as part of the Christmas Eve worship service with every cottage having a part.



We're looking forward to when we can get back up to FUMCH to perform bike maintenance and repairs. If anyone received a new bike for Christmas, we'll be glad to take your (serviceable) old one off your hands. Call 863-984-4564 for pickup. Dwight and Phyllis Kitchens, FUMCH Representatives

Missions

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I did not know what to expect this year when I started planning for the Pick-a-Pair sox project. Would I get any sox donated? How would I distribute them? God always shows us the way.

You gave over **250 pairs of sox!** Some were hung on the bushes for the preschool children at A Little Bit of Heaven (ALBOH). Hope House was given several bags full with more to come. There were some sox given that were for older children. I went to Padgett Elementary School to see if they needed them. They were delighted to get them as they are much needed. I will take them some more. God has blessed us so we can bless others.

Finally, I set up a table on Thursdays in December and gave sox to those coming to the Food Pantry. That led to fellowship time with several people coming to pick up food and with those from LGUMC who were giving it out. Again, blessing upon blessing.

One more big THANK YOU and my wishes for a blessed New Year to all of you.

Linda Alvarez, Missions Coordinator



Carol Campbell stopped by to visit with Linda during a Food Pantry morning when sox were given to our friends in need.

Children's sox were very popular, making it hard to keep the shrubs "stocked".



Methodists Must Challenge Racism -- Sundays, Jan 10 - Feb 14, 6:00 - 7:30 pm, via Zoom

Do you want to learn about racism and becoming an anti-racist, but don't know how to do that? Do you wonder why the Methodist Church is concerned with the Black Lives Matter movement? We have a study for YOU!

The Gulf Central District is offering this six-week study which combines Methodist principles with the *Guided Conversations about Race in Holding Up Your Corner* (by Pastor F. Willis Johnson from Ferguson, Missouri). Christians shouldn't be silent while neighbors are suffering. Christians' failure to confront racism corrupts our faithful witness to society. The subject of racism can be overwhelming, but this study will help you understand it and begin challenging injustice in your community.

Registration: www.anona.com/adultgroups

For those wanting to get an early jump start, here are links to order the \$10 Participant Book:

<https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9781501837623/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Holding-Your-Corner-Participant-Book/dp/1501837621>

<https://www.christianbook.com/holding-corner-participant-guided-conversations-about/f-johnson/9781501837623/pd/837623>

From your Gulf Central Anti-Racism Team on Training & Accountability: ***Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.***

Harriet Tubman



Lay Leader's Letter

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

May it be healthy and prosperous for you, your family and friends!

Listen to the hymn "O Come, O Come Immanuel" and read Psalm 111 (KJV).

SHALOM!

John Bernat, Lay Leader

Faith in Action: News and Views of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society

This year has been unprecedented in so many ways, but your witness has reminded us that United Methodists will continue to put their faith in action -- no matter if you're standing in line, sitting at home, or praying over Zoom!

What we're talking about now:

Pray for Lasting Peace in Armenia Retired Bishop Charlene Kammerer calls us to pray for peaceful resolution to the crisis in Armenia.

Gratitude as a Spiritual Discipline Theological intern Amanda Holmes writes that when gratitude is approached as a spiritual discipline, it sustains us on the struggle for justice.

Statement on Black Lives Matter signs burned at Washington, D.C. Churches Violence, hatred and racism are antithetical to the Christian Gospel.

Healing our educational system is an extremely important step to healing our country Theological intern Emily Newman shares what she took away from a week of action and learning in the Called Seminar on educational equity.

Subscribe to the General Board of Church and Society's YouTube channel for the latest updates. Address: Church and Society, 100 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC 20002

[Source: Email, 17 Dec 20, 1:35 pm, Church and Society (gbcs@umcjustice.org), subject: Faith in Action.]

Food Pantry Needs

We thank everyone who brings food into the church office for the Food Pantry.

We can always use the following:

Canned carrots
Vegetable soup
Vienna sausages
Spaghetti sauce (best buy is at Aldi for 85 cents, packaged in plastic jars).
We can always use peanut butter (Dollar Tree or Aldi) and jelly (Dollar Tree).

Thanks for all your help,

Ann Johnson

Editorial Policy

The articles contained in *The Good News* express the opinions of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect policies of the United Methodist Church or of Lake Gibson United Methodist Church.

The purpose of the newsletter is to foster better communication of ideas and opportunities for worship and service among LGUMC members and friends as we seek to share God's love and make disciples of Jesus Christ. All members and constituents are encouraged to write articles and share their thoughts and photos with the congregation.

Phyllis Kitchens, Editor
410-790-2662/863-984-4564
phyllis_kitchens@hotmail.com

Reporters and Photographers Needed for *The Good News*

Since Dwight and I are being extra cautious about quarantining, we need pictures and articles by the people who are attending in-person services or performing other Christian activities.

If you would like to write an article (report, announcement or an opinion piece), please send it to the email address above. Photos can be attached to a text message that explains what is going on and who is depicted (410-790-2662) or emailed to the address above. **Deadline for articles for the February newsletter is January 20th.** Thank you in advance! Phyllis

Hope House Continuing Needs

FOOD:

Canned food with a pop-top, i.e., ravioli, Spaghetti, beef stew, beanie weenies
Vienna sausages, or potted meat
Tuna or chicken salad kits
Cup of noodles
Packets of instant grits
Pop Tarts, granola bars, individual packaged cookies or snacks
Fruit cups
Kids' cereal, especially anything chocolate

HYGIENE AND MISCELLANEOUS:

Deodorant
Disposable razors
Individually wrapped toothbrushes, travel size toothpaste or toothbrush kits
Antibiotic cream (generic Neosporin)
Individual packs of pocket-sized tissues
AA or AAA batteries
Small flashlights
Hand warmer packets

CLOTHES:

Gently used:

Men's clothing, especially men's jeans or pants, sizes 32 to 34
Sweatpants
Sweatshirts
T-shirts
Socks
Jackets
Blankets
Shoes, especially men's sizes 10 1/2 to 13

Prefer new:

Men's medium underwear
Women's small or medium underwear

You can deliver your donations to the church office or directly to Hope House. Contact Debbie or Rick McLellan to discuss delivery to HH (863-327-2893).

United Methodist Women (UMW)

Lake Gibson's UMW unit and circles will not meet in person during January due to coronavirus concerns.

UMCOR in Action:

PNW Conference Obtains \$100,000 UMCOR Grant for Wildfire Recovery

By Kristen Caldwell - December 16, 2020

[Source: United Methodist News Daily Digest, December 18, 2020]

Photo provided by Dana and Kathy Bryson



Recovery efforts from devastating wildfires in the state of Washington will be ramped up significantly in 2021 thanks to a \$100,000 recovery grant the Pacific Northwest Conference received from United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). “This sets us solidly on the path to do some significant work and we just feel blessed,” said Dana Bryson, who is the co-disaster response coordinator with his wife Kathy Bryson for the PNW Conference.

The recovery grant will be used to assist the long-term recovery group to help communities devastated by the Okanagan, Douglas and Ferry County fires in northcentral Washington to begin to fill many unmet needs that just keep piling up. Dana Bryson said the grant was written so that it can be added on-to, which means they hope to support the Pine Creek Community Restoration long-term recovery group working in Malden and Pine City recover. Nearly 80 percent of their buildings were leveled in the fires that roared through the dry, hot, and windy conditions in eastern Washington.

In many of the Washington communities which stood in the pathway of some of the most devastating wildfires in recent history, UMCOR case managers and long-term recovery groups work with the uninsured and underinsured who lost everything to help pick up the pieces. “(This grant) is basically designed to help survivors move to the next phase of their life,” said Kathy Bryson.

In addition to providing recovery funding, the grant also funds UMCOR case management training, which the Brysons said is critical for volunteers and case managers who will be working with survivors. Just last week, eight trainees began the UMCOR case management training. “We wanted to get the ball rolling and get in early,” Dana Bryson said.

In the emergency response world, where volunteers from a variety of agencies are trying to provide services, Kathy Bryson said UMCOR brings credibility to the work. While a long-term recovery group is already in place in the Okanagan area (created after wildfires ripped through the area in 2014 and 2015), the long-term recovery group is still being pieced together in Malden and Pine City. “Everyone there is a survivor,” Kathy Bryson said.

The PNW Conference benefited from two \$10,000 UMCOR solidarity grants that helped with immediate response in communities while the wildfires were raging, in addition to UMCOR hygiene kits, cleaning kits, ash sifters, and school supplies for children. Additionally, the Brysons were able to secure a \$10,000 AmeriCares grant which supported primarily Spanish-speaking farm laborers displaced and distraught by the wildfires.

Long-term recovery is expected to take four to five years, which is why the Brysons are thankful to have the ability to leverage the \$100,000 UMCOR grant into more resources. As disaster response stewards for the PNW Conference, the Brysons are grateful to have received significant additional disaster response donations from local church giving to help with targeted wildfire disaster response. At least \$30,000 of these funds will be used in direct support of the current UMCOR recovery grant. Advance #352 funds are also being used to help with survivor needs because of the flooding that happened in February in the Blue Mountain area in southeastern Washington. “Our congregations have been incredibly generous,” Dana Bryson said.

Our Public Discourse Should Model the Life of Jesus

Commentary by Bishop John Schol, Greater New Jersey Area Bishop, Neptune, N.J.
[Source: United Methodist News Daily Digest, December 15, 2020]

Recently I have been in communication with two friends who have different responsibilities for processing and governing the recent presidential election. Due to the work and decisions they made, which were guided by the law, they now require personal security because of threats against them.

The 2020 election was one of the most divisive campaigns I have experienced. As someone who grew up in Philadelphia, I have experienced some pretty divisive elections, but they pale in comparison to this one.

Over the last several years we have experienced divisive rhetoric and even bullying during political campaigns. When leaders act this way, it gives approval for people taking it upon themselves **to change things they do not like through fear tactics, harassment, threats and physical harm.**

I take these things very seriously. I serve in New Jersey, and in the last year an individual came to a federal judge's home seeking to kill her because of a ruling she made. When the killer did not find the judge, he killed the judge's son and shot and wounded her husband.

I recently heard a United Methodist share that they voted for a candidate not because they agreed with the candidate's character, but because the candidate shared their values on particular issues. I have always found that values inform and shape our character — not the other way around. I have experienced that when we choose leaders with serious character issues, it not only affects their leadership, but it affects the organization or nation they lead.

The election became as divisive as it did not because of differences in values but the character of some of those campaigning, as well as the willingness of supporters to set their own character aside in how they treated people with opposite views.

I am calling all United Methodists to engage in public discourse that models the life of Jesus and to intervene when you hear or witness hate speech, bullying and people inciting others because of different political beliefs, faith understandings, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender. I am calling on United Methodists not to support, but to hold accountable, leaders whose character seeks to divide rather than honoring and respecting people with different values.

I am fortunate to serve the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey who, while not always agreeing, have come to respect and genuinely love one another in the midst of their political, theological, ethnic and racial diversity. This is the witness the world needs to see and experience.

Schol is resident bishop of the Greater New Jersey Conference.

News media contact: Tim Tanton at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umnews.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests](#).

Commentaries: *UM News publishes various commentaries about issues in the denomination. The opinion pieces reflect a variety of viewpoints and are the opinions of the writers, not the UM News staff.*

Black United Methodists Want Changes

By Jim Patterson

Dec. 14, 2020 | United Methodist News Daily Digest

Black United Methodists warn in a new book of essays that it's critical the denomination deal with racial issues with a sense of urgency. "I think there's been a great deal of debate around human sexuality but no conversation, for the most part, around the part that race has played in the problems the denomination is facing," said the Rev. Rudy Rasmus, senior pastor at St. John's Downtown Church in Houston and editor of the book *I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist*.

"I really think that now is the time where the conversation has to occur as to whether or not Blacks do have a future in the denomination. ... If America needs to face its dark past in race, I think it's also time for the church."

"I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist," published by Abingdon Press and edited by the Rev. Rudy Rasmus, is a collection of essays about the experiences of Black United Methodists. The book can be purchased at the Abingdon Press website, <https://www.abingdonpress.com>.

In the forward of the book, published in November by Abingdon Press, West Ohio Area Bishop Gregory V. Palmer said that each of the 10 essayists are saying "See me, hear me, deal with me." "The confluence of the everyday indignities of being Black in America; the outrageous, egregious, legalized lynching of George Floyd; and the unforgivable disparities exposed once again by COVID-19 have conspired together to create a seminal moment in America and in The United Methodist Church — in which we must find the courage to say unambiguously *Black Lives Matter. Black Life Matters.*" Palmer goes on to say that stumbling over those phrases is "beneath the gospel," and dismissing the truth of the phrases because of efforts to "smear it and hope it will go away is a colossal failure of nerve."

The autobiographical essays key in on the varied experiences of Black United Methodists. Included are chapters on being a lesbian, a stutterer and a Black preacher in a predominately white church. Rasmus' own essay, "I'm (Really) Black. I'm (Amazingly) Christian. I'm Methodist (For Now)," explores his conflicted feelings about the place of Blacks in Methodism.

"I believe the great undoing of the church's prominence in society began when church leaders started focusing on numerical and financial growth as the benchmarks of success, while ignoring the fact that government policies were put in place that would ultimately incarcerate millions of Black people who had become victims of state-sponsored drug addiction," he wrote.

"Millions of missing Black people who could have potentially become participants of organized religion vanished to prisons and into the dark crevices of drug culture while the ideological turn from the church as a proponent for civil justice became a mission to build mega-ministries with prosperous participants."

In an interview, Rasmus said that since America was built on slave labor, "to assume that Methodism hasn't benefited from slavery would be naïve. ... Even though (Methodists) didn't advocate for slavery ... it's still benefiting from those policies 400 years ago."

This history needs to be considered as the church moves toward a split over LGBTQ issues, he said. "Reparations as a word has become a lightning rod," Rasmus said. "But the equitable redistribution of assets should be considered even as a denomination is thinking about its future apart from one another. ... There should be some consideration for the 400 years of free labor that all institutions benefitted from prior to what we deemed as freedom."

Continued on the next page . . .

Black United Methodists Want Changes, Continued

In his essay, Ross lists actions taken by the church that have hurt Black United Methodists. Those include:

- Taking Black clergy away from Black churches by offering higher salaries and connectional positions.
- Selling church properties in predominantly Black cities and towns.
- Charging the same percentage of apportionments from Black and white churches, despite Black income and wealth being significantly lower than that of whites.
- Selling Black congregations the properties of white churches, which are too expensive to maintain.
- Selling Black-built properties after churches close with the annual conference getting the money instead of using it to minister to those left in the community.

“There has never been a clearer call to systemic change that would be in the best interests of the Black church,” Ross said in the book. Rasmus said one answer might be to reassure white United Methodists that there is an abundance of resources to go around. “Inadequacy is thinking that I’m not enough,” he said. “Scarcity is thinking that there won’t be enough. “I would first say, ‘You are enough and that there is enough for all of us.’”

Jim Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or news-desk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests](#).

Hope House Happenings (Excerpts from HH Volunteer Reports)

TUESDAY, December 8, 2020 at HOPE CENTER - Debbie and Rick McLellan

This week we tried something a little different. We recruited some of our guests and performed a skit based on Revelation chapter 20, titled THE BOOKS WERE OPENED. Everyone seemed to have fun while learning that knowing Jesus makes a difference now and forever. Today Debbie and Rick served sloppy joes and roasted Italian potatoes. Our brown to-go bag of sides included a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a bag of chips, a Rice Krispies Treat and a fruit cup. We served 17 guests today.

Debbie was busy and gave out masks, toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, socks, lantern and radio batteries, camping toilet paper and Band-Aids. We also gave out a number of clothing items and **about 10 pairs of shoes**.

We received donations and help this week from several faithful people who keep us going. It was good to see Jim Aldrich from Christ the King Episcopal Church, Rob and Sue Atchley, and Kim, from our Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, the couple from the Lion's Club, Julio Santana, and the wonderful employees of Lakeland Electric. We also had a visit from Laura, and Brent stopped in to fix the rear door dead bolt lock.

TUESDAY, December 15, 2020 at HOPE CENTER - Debbie and Rick McLellan

Today our guests got a treat. "Chef" Dick McPherson, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, served his wonderful pulled pork, macaroni salad, and coleslaw. Our brown to-go bag of sides included a tuna salad sandwich, a bag of chips, a pudding cup, and a fruit bar. To quench thirst was ice cold bottled
Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

water with optional flavoring packet, or cans of Zephyrhills sparkling lemonade. Each guest also received a pop-top can (choice of spaghetti, ravioli or Beefaroni) which they took to their tents for their supper meal. We served 27 guests today.

Debbie was busy and gave out masks, toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, socks, lantern and radio batteries, camping toilet paper and Band-Aids. We also gave out a number of clothing items, many Harley-Davidson and Indian motorcycle T-shirts and 3 pairs of shoes. We also gave Red a Buccaneer jersey.

We received a donation of a number of things from Jim Aldrich, from Christ the King Episcopal Church, and some items from other churches, including Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. We also had a donation which Brent is taking care of, from The Cypress Lakes Veterans Auxiliary (VFW). We had a visit from Pastor Steve Polk, our terrific pastor from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. He is an encourager to our guests, as well as to us volunteers.

WEDNESDAY, December 16th at Hope House - Laura Webb, Lesley and Geri Mayo

Since it is going to be very cold on Thursday, our guests were encouraged to take a heavy jacket and warm clothes. Laura provided the devotion: Meeting with God, Day 4, TEACH US TO PRAY. "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* (Matthew 26:39) Please see the prayer request at the bottom of this newsletter.

For lunch, Laura made delicious chicken and yellow rice and mixed vegetables. Every guest also received a turkey and cheese or PB&J sandwich and two pantry items. Several people stopped by to drop off clothing and food donations. Hope House is so blessed by their generosity!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Please pray for the pastors and their families of Fuel Church. Many have contracted COVID-19. One pastor, Pastor Dan Fife, has passed away.

Also, a text was received from Mandy at Lake Gibson Church of the Nazarene: "Our church has several staff, board members, and daycare employees who have COVID-19, or are experiencing symptoms and still awaiting results. We do not feel it is in the best interest of our friends at Hope House to hold a church service this Sunday [December 20th]. We will shoot for the third week in January, which is the 17th." Please pray for healing.

TUESDAY, December 22, 2020 at HOPE CENTER - Debbie and Rick McLellan

Today our guests got a treat. Rob and Sue Atchley, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, served a terrific ham dinner, with a squash casserole, green beans and a roll. They also brought homemade cookies and M&Ms. Debbie also made Christmas decorated cupcakes. Our brown to-go bag of sides included a fried ham and cheese sandwich on a bun, a bag of pretzels, a pack of Lance crackers, and an applesauce cup. Each guest also received a pop-top can (choice of spaghetti, ravioli or Beefaroni) which they took to their tents for their supper meal. We served 30 guests by the end of the day.

Debbie was busy and gave out **Christmas Ziploc gift bags**, with men's and women's versions of useful items. The men's bag, for example, had Deep Woods Off mosquito repellent, new socks, new underwear, a cloth face mask, deodorant, soap, shampoo, conditioner, a razor, toothbrush, toothpaste, a bag for toiletries, a candy cane and a Christmas tract. Everyone also received a new giant red, white and blue towel that they could take to their tent for personal use. Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

We received a donation of a number of things which are inside; we didn't get much put away as it was a very hectic day. Among the donors was Harry Card, a military veteran who also served as a volunteer at Hope Center. Harry has been on our prayer list, and wanted us to know that he was feeling much better.

WEDNESDAY, December 23, 2020 at HOPE HOUSE - Laura Webb, Lesley and Geri Mayo

It was a very busy day with 26 guests signing in. Twelve (12) guests used the showers and 6 the laundry facilities. Lori was not able to volunteer at Hope House today. Lesley, who usually volunteers on Friday, came today. She worked very hard sorting the clothing donations and making sure everyone was able to access the clothing boutique, jackets, and blankets.

Laura asked our guests for prayer requests. One guest, Christina, ask for traveling mercies. She is moving to Tennessee. A young man asked for prayer for his brother who is on death row. Another guest asked for prayer for all the children of the world.



Laura prepared a delicious lunch. It consisted of seasoned pork loins, baked beans, a vegetable medley, cheesy garlic potatoes (made by Geri) and bread. Juice packets were added to the beverage choices. Our guests received a take-home bag with a PB&J or ham and cheese sandwich, Vienna sausages and a bag of chips.

Our lovely lunch! The pork loins and potatoes were donations. We are so blessed!

FRIDAY, December 25, 2020 at HOPE HOUSE - Laura Webb, Lesley and Geri Mayo

Merry Christmas from Hope House!

It was a fantastic, albeit cold, day at Hope House. A total of 37 guests signed in.

A heartfelt thank you to the folks who volunteered their time on Christmas Day: Laura and her husband, Daniel; Emmett and Lisa; Tim; Lesley and her friend, Aldon and Geri. A hot breakfast was served: scrambled eggs, bacon, mini muffins made by Ms. Jean, and biscuits. Coffee, cocoa, and hot tea were the breakfast beverage choices.

Laura told the true Christmas story. For unto us, Child is given . . .

Our Christmas lunch was a veggie tray, potato soup made by Ms. Jean, turkey, regular and cheesy mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, macaroni and cheese, dinner rolls, several desserts, and candy bags sent home with folks. (The Hope House cats enjoyed their lunch as well.)

Thanks to wonderful, generous donors, our guests received a backpack. Each one had a flashlight, hand warmers, hygiene products, socks and underwear. And on the coldest December day so far, they received a brand new sleeping bag. God is so good!

Merry Christmas! May God bless you in this upcoming New Year.

Hope House backpacks. A special thanks to the friends and family of Renee, Fuel Baptist Church, and to Lake Gibson Church of the Nazarene. Photo provided by Geri Mayo





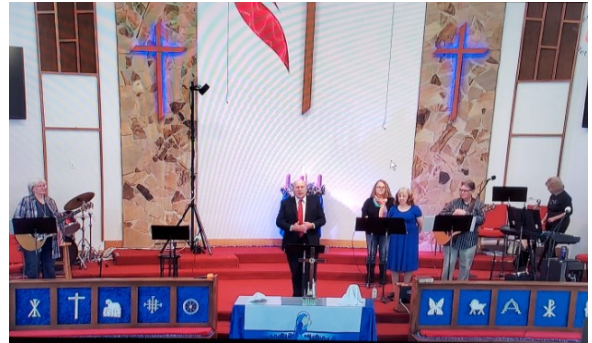
Birthdays in January

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
1/1	Jamie Collins
1/1	Joyce Thompson
1/2	Joe Moon
1/4	Rochelle McBride
1/7	Kathy Rumohr
1/8	Stella Eismann
1/11	Lexie Otte
1/12	Todd Bower
1/16	Ramona Kendall
1/20	Bob Blead
1/20	Donna Pardis
1/20	Abba Schmidt
1/20	Issac Wiley
1/21	Shirley Lux
1/24	Anthony Wilde
1/26	Barbara Allen-Coil
1/27	Linda Alvarez
1/27	Ruth Zona
1/30	Jackie Webb



Anniversaries in January

None



Pastor and the Praise Team during 12/6/20 communion service (Diane Siegal, Pastor Steve, Fay Herrick, Bev Ellis, Jay Ellis and Glenda Hess, Music Director)



Pastor Steve leading the Christmas Eve Service

How to View Ms. Garrick's Sale Items (Article on pages 5 and 6)

To see the available handmade items and support Ms. Garrick's mission, go to the Facebook page for Gulf Central District FL United Methodist Women, <https://www.facebook.com/Gcdflumw/>.

Only available items will be shown. If you wish to buy one, write SOLD on the comment line with your contact information. Cathy Stone will follow up for payment and delivery.