



THE GOOD NEWS

Lake Gibson United Methodist Church



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

From the Pastor

This month is the month most of the world celebrates love and those we love on Valentine's Day. It falls on a Sunday, a Holy Sabbath Day, this year. How often do we think about God's love for us and mankind on that day? Thinking back over the past few sermons, we have seen how Jesus restored sight to blind Bartimaeus, a man the Jews of that time would have thought cursed of God because of his blindness.

Then Jesus ate with and became friends with Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector in Jericho. This man would have been seen as a traitor to the Jews, someone who was to be rejected and avoided at all cost, someone to be despised. Yet Jesus welcomed him into His presence and the Kingdom.

Then we saw how Jesus purposefully traveled through Samaria, an area normally avoided by any self-respecting Jew. Samaritans were scum to the Jews, not worth anything and to be avoided at all costs. Yet Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman of ill-repute offering her His life-giving water of eternal life. Then he stayed in Samaria for two more days and brought many more Samaritans into His Kingdom.

The actions of Jesus should speak volumes to us today. In His actions we should begin to see that every human being is loved by God, and all people, even those written off or overlooked by society, are important to God. The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20 is phrased like this: ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. (NRSV)

Notice it says to go to them, not for them to come to us. I just wonder if we in the United States and the American Church have forgotten that it is we as the church, the community that represents Jesus, that are to be going to those in need? Have we forgotten that God can change people (transform them) into His likeness?

Have we forgotten that we are to love our enemy? It seems like the last few months have been filled with rhetoric, hate-filled rants and social media posts, false narratives and sometimes outright lies by many who claim to be Christians. Sisters and Brothers, this ought not to be. As Paul said in Ephesians 5:3, impurity of any kind should not be named among us.

This month along with reaffirming our love to our family, let's open our hearts to those we take for granted and overlook. Let's extend a branch of peace to our enemies and show them the same compassion and respect Jesus showed others. May we make the effort, take the step, cross the aisle and extend the hand of friendship to others in the love of Christ.

Pastor Steve

Date**February Events (as of 1/27/2021)**

- 1 - 28 **Black History Month**
- 1 **Board of Trustees meeting, 2:00 pm, Sanctuary**
- 2 **Weekly Tuesday, 10:30 am, Bible study** led by Glenda Hess, 400 Vineyard Drive.
Book: *The Logic of God* by Ravi Zacharias (see article)
- 3 **Organizational Meeting of Merry Matters, 11:00 am, Family Life Center (FLC).**
Group will be making ground mats for the homeless from plastic grocery bags (see article)
- 3 - 4 Transit Equity Days (supported by UMW Climate Justice initiative) (see article)
- 4 Zoom Bible Study with Pastor Steve, 1:00 pm, repeating weekly on Thursdays
- 4 Zoom Webinar, 7:00 pm, *Still in Mission: Cambodia, Indonesia and the U.S.* (see article)
- 8 **Whosoever, Monthly Bible study (*The Chosen*), Monday, 6:00 pm**, led by Debbie Moore, 400 Vineyard Dr.
- 11 **A Little Bit of Heaven (ALBOH) Child Enrichment Center Board meeting, 2:00 pm, FLC**
- 11 Faith Talks UMW Podcast (Zoom), *Creating a Sustainable Lifestyle*; held monthly on 2nd Thursdays, 2:00 pm, various topics
- 11 Zoom Presentation, **Cancer in the Black Community: A Research Update**, 5:30 to 7:00 pm by Moffitt Cancer Center (see article)
- 13 **United Methodist Men Breakfast meeting, 9:00 am, FLC**
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 14 **Harvest Sunday Food Pantry Donations**, Sanctuary (or deliver to office, Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm)
- 15 **Presidents Day** Federal Holiday
- 15 **United Methodist Women Unit meeting and brown bag lunch, 10:30 am, FLC**
(Business meeting, no guest speaker)
- 22 UMW Leadership Committee meeting, 11:00 am, FLC
- 22 Just Energy for All 101 class, UMW (all invited), 1st of 3 classes on Zoom, 3:00 pm (see article)
- 23 Eat, Pray, Grow monthly Zoom meeting of EarthKeepers and those interested in creation care, noon to 1:00 pm, 4th Thursdays (see article).
- 25 Prepare for Sidewalk Sale, 6:00 pm, FLC. Call Lynn Meske (863858-3589) to volunteer to help or to donate items (see article)
- 26 **Sidewalk Sale, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm** (masks and social distancing required)
- 27 **Sidewalk Sale, 8:00 am to noon** (masks and social distancing required)
- 28 **CROP Hunger Walk, 1:30 pm, Lakeland Presbyterian Church** or virtual walk at date, time and place of your choosing. All donations must be in by Sunday, March 14th.

Don't Forget to Donate to CROP Hunger Walk!

This year's walk is officially Sunday, February 28th. This is NOT the traditional group start, but you are welcome to walk around Lake Hollingsworth observing COVID-19 safety precautions at any time.

You can actually walk anywhere at any time. To sign up to walk, go to the Lakeland CROP Walk website <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/lakelandfl>.

The beneficiaries of the Lakeland CROP Hunger Walk will be Lighthouse Ministries, Talbot House and **Church World Service's** food, health, nutrition, temporary shelter, and water projects around the world.

Please make your contribution to Lake Gibson UMC with a note that it is for CROP Walk. Our self-assigned goal is \$500, a small increase over 2020, and we have a pledge of \$200 already.

Phyllis Kitchens

Seekers Sunday School Class Resumes

The Seekers SS Class started meeting in person on Sunday, January 17th, in the Family Life Center library. Masks are required as well as social distancing.

Class begins at 9:15 am and ends at 10:00 am. In the January 17th class we talked about the Promises of God that are found in Scripture. *I think that maybe we as Christians sometimes forget that God has made us promises in His Word and we have the right, as Children of God, to claim these Scriptures.*

If I am able to "physically" continue this class, my next study might be Finding Jesus in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Everyone is invited to attend.

Blessings,

Sue Heishman

Note: The Friendship Sunday School Class has been meeting in person for some time.

United Methodist Men (UMM) Meeting, Saturday, February 13th, 9:00 am

The UMM held their first meeting since the COVID-19 outbreak on December 12th 2020. We discussed several upcoming projects for the new year. We voted to donate \$100.00 to the Boy Scouts for the upgrading of the LGUMC Garden walkway.

We will be renovating the shrubs along the walkway between the Family Life Center (FLC) and A Little Bit of Heaven (ALBOH) Child Enrichment Center. We are looking into getting low-growth and low-maintenance shrubs for that area. We repaired the fence enclosure around the air conditioners due to the tornado last month. We are planning to repair concrete pavers between ALBOH and the FLC as they are a possible trip hazard.

We will be holding the next UMM meeting on **February 13th, 2021 at 9:00 am** in the FLC for anyone wishing to attend. There will be a light breakfast with juice and coffee. This will be a **work day** if the weather allows. So bring a shovel, rakes and picks as well as work gloves. I will provide the wheel barrow and posthole diggers.

We hope that all men who attend LGUMC would come to our meeting and help support our efforts to perform small upgrades to the appearance and safety of the church property.

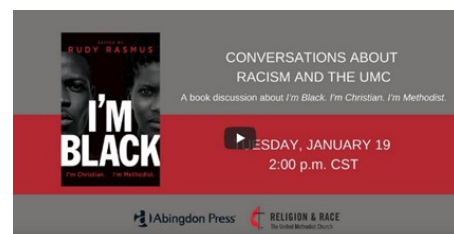
Thanks to all who help support the UMM.

Michael Moake, UMM President

Missed January 19th's Conversations about Racism and the UMC?

If you missed January 19th's presentation by authors of the essays in the book *I'm Black I'm Christian I'm Methodist*, edited by Rudy Rasmus, you can watch it at the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGubZwHeRWk>



#StillinMission Webinar February 4, 2021, 7:00 PM EST

You are invited to join us for **#StillinMission, Episode 27**. During the event you will have the chance to **watch a presentation from one of the missionaries listed below** and learn more about how God is at work through the United Methodist Church all over the world. If you want to learn more about these missionaries before the event, click on their names to be taken to their biographies or visit www.umcmmission.org.

Featuring... [Register for **one** of these missionaries. Each person will speak to viewers using a Zoom breakout room.]

[Ho Yan Lee](#) is serving as a Peace Process Accompanier with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia.

[Juarez Goncalves](#) is serving as the Conference Coordinator for Latino Ministries and Church Developer for Brazilian Ministries with Igreja Metodista in the United States.

[Clara Biswas](#) is serving as the Director for Street Children Ministry in Cambodia.

[Brenda Nguwa](#) is serving as the Coordinator for Youth Ministry and Social Outreach Programs with Gereja Methodist in Indonesia.

[To register, click here.](#) Registration is required.

United Methodist Missionaries are **#stillinmission** and we hope that you'll join us to learn more! As always, if you have any questions at all or if you want promotional materials for your church or small group, please let us know! We cannot wait to see you in a few weeks.

Want to hear recordings of previous meetings? [Visit our vimeo channel.](#)

Sincerely,
The Itineration Team

Eric Angel, Senior Manager of Itineration & Missionary Support
Brandolyn Pope, Program Associate
Erica Oliveira, Missionary Support Coach

LGUMC Name Badges

Who is that person sitting six feet away from you in our sanctuary? You're sure you know them! Well, if you are like me, sometimes the name just 'slips my mind'. Name badges are still available from the church (with either a pinned or magnetic backing) for only \$10 each.

You can see an example of a badge, and find a fillable order form, at: [Name Tags – Lake Gibson United Methodist Church \(lakegibsonumc.com\)](#). If you are like me, and have lost your own, why not order another copy? Or have a second one to put in your other car? That way, regardless of which one you drive to church, you always have your nametag available when you get there.

Food Pantry Report

First, let me thank the volunteers who have worked in the food pantry: Ruth Zona, Sharon Coddington, Cathy D'Amato, Sharon and Dick Shepherd and Tom Burns. Also, thanks to Pastor Steve and Kristie Otte who are always ready to step in.

We are receiving food donations weekly for the pantry, and thanks to everyone for them. We would not make it without volunteers and donations of food and money.

In 2020 we had **631 bags of groceries** go out and **661 bags of bread and sweets**. The bread and sweets all come from Publix. Finally, thank you to the volunteers who pick up the Publix donations on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

Thanks for all your help,

Ann Johnson

Got a Question? Ask the UMC

A diverse and ever-growing collection of frequently asked questions and their answers is available in the **Ask the UMC online library**. Share the resource with your friends and family. They may find answers to some of their own questions.

To submit your questions or to read questions and answers that have already been submitted, go to <https://www.umc.org/en/what-we-believe/ask-the-umc-faqs>.

Prayer Ministry

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed. Because His commandments fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I hope in Him.” Lamentations 3:22-24 (NKJV)

At times we feel unstable and insecure; however, it is Jesus to whom we turn to in prayer. Our prayers for others meet an especially important need in our church and the community. Let us be ever faithful serving God in His request to love and serve one another.

Your prayer request is shared with the congregation during Sunday Service and Pastor Steve acknowledges those requests during service prayer. The prayer requests then move on to Prayer Ministry’s prayer warriors, for continued prayers.

If there is a long-term health concern, names are entered on our Prayer Journal so prayers can continue for at least 6 months. For shorter term health concerns, an Intercessory Prayer team prays over prayer requests for up to one month.

If you wish to join our Prayer Ministry, please call the church office.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us who pray in the name of Christ, this day and evermore. Amen

Lake Gibson Prayer Ministry - Fran

New Bible Study Group, Tuesdays at 10:30 am

This new group is using *The Logic of God* by Ravi Zacharias. Quoting leader, Glenda Hess: “This book feeds us on dairy-free protein (the meat of God’s Word, not milk).”

There is room for a few more members. We ordered 13 copies of the book at \$16.49 each. If you’re interested in joining the group, call Sue Heishman to obtain one of the extra copies. Class meets at 400 Vineyard Dr, Lakeland (Debbie Moore’s home).

Antiracism Prayer: And the Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us . . .

You dwelt among us with skin, brown skin.

You dwelt among us with a Middle Eastern accent.

You dwelt among us as part of a working-class family.

Forgive us for assigning babies at birth to a culture of systemic racism because of the color of their skin.

This Epiphany and beyond, may we celebrate and embrace your image enfleshed in all skin tones.

Amen

Written by Phyllis Terwilliger, a member of United Methodist Women, December 2020

[Source: United Methodist Church Discipleship Ministries, Praying for Change: Daily Prayers for Anti-Racism, January 14, 2021. Used with permission.

To sign up to receive a daily anti-racism prayer or to read the ones already published, go to <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/subscribe>.

Paycheck Protection Program

Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 started out rather slowly. When the Federal Government’s Small Business Administration offered the Paycheck Protection Program we thought it best to insure that our employees would not suffer a loss of revenue due to the pandemic. Therefore, we applied for and obtained a loan in the amount of \$25,235.00. If we adhered to the requirements of the CARES Act, we were eligible for either partial or full forgiveness of the loan amount.

We are happy to report that after submitting our documentation, we were granted **full forgiveness** of this amount. This has been a boon to the church and insured that there was no necessity to demand a cut in hours of employment for our staff.

Dwight Kitchens, Finance Committee Chair

Annual Contribution Statements

For many of us, this may not be important. With the doubling of the standard deduction against Federal Income Taxes starting in FY 2020, many of us have no need to submit our Annual Contribution Statement to the Internal Revenue Service. All of our itemized deductions will be less than the new standard deduction.

On January 14th emails and letters were sent out with copies of your Annual Contribution Statements. Unfortunately, we 'jumped the gun'. It appears that some online payments and the December 27th offerings had not yet been posted. Therefore, a revised statement was prepared and delivered in the same fashion. We regret the inconvenience this may have caused.

For many of us, getting the Annual Contribution Statement reminds us to rethink how we are financially supporting the missions of our church. It helps us to plan for this year. Did we give a tithe last year? Could we actually do better? Did we support specific designated funds we believe are imperative for the execution of our ministry?

Whether you give by check, bill-pay, debit card, credit card or cash, developing a workable contribution plan and systematically executing it are worthwhile endeavors. It might not have been in your New Year's Resolutions, but it is not too late to rethink what our church means to you.

Dwight Kitchens, Finance Committee Chair

Property and Liability Insurance News

Insurers worldwide have been increasing rates yearly. Whether it is due to drought, hurricanes, earthquakes or fires, casualty losses have tremendously increased. But, this is a small portion of the insurance for which a church must plan. Liability premiums also increase as we become a more litigious society. The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church (FLUMC) purchases a bundle of insurance for its churches covering over twenty possible losses.

This year, the FLUMC's premium has **gone up over two million dollars**. Thankfully, a decision has been made to use interest earned on investments to offset any premium increases

Continued . . .

Property and Liability Insurance News, Continued

for the local church. So . . . our premiums remain the same in FY 2021 as they were in FY 2020. Still significant, but they certainly could be worse.

More great news: We have sufficient funds to pay off the yearly Property and Liability (P&L) Insurance premium prior to 28 February 2021. This gives us a 2% discount on our annual premium.

Dwight Kitchens, Finance Committee Chair

A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center (ALBOH)

Congratulations are due Ms. Latisha Cook, Director, and the staff of ALBOH, as well as to Sarah Schiemann, ALBOH Board Chair, the other church members and the parent representative who serve on the Board.

During November 2020 ALBOH underwent a rigorous on-site inspection of their operations by staff of the Florida League of Christian Schools. This is part of the periodic review leading to recertification of accreditation.

The staff spent numerous hours reviewing procedures and making modifications where necessary prior to the inspection. The ALBOH Board approved a number of expenditures to upgrade equipment which was in need of replacement, to include the playground ground cover, fencing and playground equipment.

While awaiting a detailed report, **we are pleased to announce that ALBOH has received accreditation thru 2025.**

Electrical Upgrades

The Sanctuary, Family Life Center (FLC) and A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center (ALBOH) have been undergoing electrical upgrades. Many of the florescent lights have been replaced by light emitting diode (LED) tubes. This should extend the time between tube replacements and provide better lighting at a reduced electrical cost.

Continued on the next page . . .

Electrical Upgrades, Continued

Each light tube generally requires rewiring of the fixture which takes about an hour. If you ever counted the number of lights around our campus you would likely be very surprised. The main lights within ALBOH, the Sanctuary and the FLC's 1st floor have been replaced. Eventually, the 2nd floor of the FLC and the remaining lights of the Sanctuary will be replaced as well.

Replacement of the large drop-down Sanctuary lights and FLC's large cans will require contracting with an electrical company and will await future upgrades. Much thanks goes to Michael Moake and Tom Burns who have done most of the work on our lighting upgrades.

Not to be outdone, Bob Siegel and David McPherson joined Michael and Tom in upgrading most of our audio visual wiring within the sanctuary. Running wires; installing stage power boxes; soldering hundreds of connectors; wiring amplifiers, microphones, speakers, etc. have been done since the COVID-19 pandemic started. One benefit of having the Sanctuary closed during the first few months of the pandemic is that it permitted us to run numerous wires across the floor as work progressed.

Again, having such dedicated volunteers with the skills needed (if they didn't have them when we started, they certainly do now!) has eliminated the necessity to contract out much of the work. There are certainly many jobs which could still be performed in support of LGUMC's facilities. Why not consider how you could help? Please contact Tom Burns, Board of Trustees, at 863-670-5233 if you would like to help.

Can Your Friends Find You? (Using the Church Directory)

The first week of January I was asked how a member might contact another member of the church. My immediate thought was to introduce the caller to the online church directory. Of course, it is password protected (password available from the church office at 863-858-5431). I quickly logged in from our website at www.lakegibsonumc.com by clicking on the [Church Directory](#) hyperlink and typing in the password.

Continued . . .

Using the Church Directory, Continued

Unfortunately, our member never asked that their name be included in the directory. So, no go. No name, no address, no email address, no phone number and no photograph. Fortunately, I had the name and phone number on my phone.

But, this raises the question as to how many of us are **NOT IN THE DIRECTORY?** Are you?

Please ask for the password, click the hyperlink and check out your own record. If you want others within the church to be able to find you, ask Kristie to include your information in the directory and insure that your information is correct. If it is not up-to-date, again call Kristie at the church office with the updated information. If your photo is missing, consider sending a new one to Kristie (office@lakegibsonumc.com) or ask that we arrange to take a snapshot for you.

The electronic Church Directory is a useful tool. Copy and paste the hyperlink into either your phone, tablet or computer to get quick access to the information you need. This is especially useful on phones as the database is kept up-to-date and you can dial the number directly from your phone's screen.

Merry Matters Making Many Mats!

Are you getting tired of the lack of socializing?

Are you concerned with the number of plastic bags that overload our landfills?

Are you looking for ways to help the homeless people in our area?

Join the Merry Matters!

We are looking for anyone and everyone who is interested in getting together once or twice a month for a little socializing and fellowship, as we make mats for the homeless. These crocheted mats are placed under bedding to keep people who sleep outside off the damp or cold ground.

Continued on the next page . . .

Merry Matters Making Many Mats, Continued

Our first get-together will be on **Wednesday, February 3rd, at 11:00 am in the FLC.** This will consist of an introduction to our goals and the process, and developing a schedule for our activities.

We will be crocheting mats for the homeless using plastic grocery bags (or same-size shopping bags). Shirley Schmidt has been making mats on her own for some time. It takes **1500 bags to make one mat.** Let's help her out!

You do not need to know how to crochet. **There is a job for everyone:** the plastic bags need to be collected, sorted by color, handles and bottom seams cut off, folded, cut into strips, tied together, wound into balls of "plarn" (plastic yarn) and then crocheted.

A bag collection barrel has been set up in the narthex so you can bring your bags to church or bring them to the church office. Please, no dirty or torn bags.

If you are interested or have any questions concerning this group, please contact Lynn Meske at 863-858-3589 or email lynn.meske@gmail.com. Photo by Lynn Meske



Looking forward to our **Merry Matters Making Many Mats!**

Lynn Meske

Our Website

Have you looked at the church's website www.LakeGibsonUMC.com recently? If not, please, take a few minutes to see the variety of information that is available at your fingertips.

Did you forget to mention a prayer request this past Sunday? Why not look on the left-hand side of our opening page and click "Submit Your Prayer Request"? You don't need to wait all week to have it sent to our email Prayer Warriors who will start praying over it immediately.

Continued . . .

Our Website, Continued

If you missed getting an email with the link to our church newsletter, or you forgot to pick up a printed copy from the narthex, consider opening a color copy on your computer, tablet or smartphone. Just click the hyperlink which says "[appropriate month] 2021 Church Newsletter". (You can also view newsletters from prior years.)

Need to call someone in the church? Didn't bring your four-year-old paper directory with you? Why not use the online [Church Directory](#), described in a separate article.

Ever listen to the radio? Ever used an iPod? Got a smartphone on which you listen to music? Answering 'yes' to any of these might make you a prime candidate for a **free Podcast subscription.** We put each week's sermon and 'Left Overs' online as a Podcast as well as a video. This permits you to subscribe to a Podcast whereby our weekly sermons and 'Left Overs' are converted to audio-only files for your listening enjoyment. Links to app stores (Google, Apple and Spotify) are all on the front page of our website.

New to Lake Gibson UMC? Consider filling out our [online connection card](#) and we'll donate \$10 to one of a number of charities.

You've probably either seen or heard our sermons. Masterpieces each one. But there is more information on the site. The **heading banner** (in red) covers information about departments, programs, etc. Browse through the options and you may be surprised to learn new things you didn't know that might interest you.

Check out the **footer** with subjects such as WORSHIP WITH US, CONTACT US, MEET OUR STAFF, links to SERMONS, NEWSLETTERS and BLOGS, as well as SERVICE AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES.

The numerous pages of our website attempt to provide up-to-date information and answer many of the recurring questions which arise. Should you find anything which you believe is outdated or incorrect, please send an email to Administrator@LakeGibsonUMC.com.

Dwight Kitchens

Black History Month Events

The Social Principles of The **United Methodist Church** recognize **racism** as a sin, and commit to challenging unjust systems of power and access. Additional information and resources are available online at [UMC.org/EndRacism](https://www.UMC.org/EndRacism). The following television programs and print media support this initiative to increase our awareness of racial inequality which has been ignored, or even furthered, by members of white churches, including The United Methodist Church.

1. On **Saturday, February 6th at 10:00 pm**, WEDQ (channel 16) presents *Freedom Summer*.

2. On **Monday, February 8th at 9:00 pm**, WEDU (channel 3) will show **Goin' Back to T-Town**, about the attack on Greenwood, a prosperous Black neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 31st and June 1st, 1921. Thirty-five square blocks of the town were destroyed in what may be the worst racially motivated massacre of Blacks in our history. More than 800 people were hospitalized and approximately 6,000 Black residents were confined for several days. It is believed that 39 people died: 26 Blacks and 13 whites, although the numbers range widely in various sources.

3. Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is airing a two-part series, *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song*:

Part 1, **Tuesday, February 16th at 9:00 pm** on WEDU discusses the roots of African-American religion and covers slavery through emancipation.

Part 2, **Tuesday, February 23rd at 9:00 pm** on WEDU describes the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights movement and up to the present. It will examine how the Black church expanded its reach to address social inequality and minister to those in need.

4. WEDU will present *The Groveland Four* on **Friday, February 19th at 11:00 pm**. Four Black youths were accused of raping a 17-year-old white girl in July 1949. Quoting WEDU PBS *Premiere* magazine, "The case of the Groveland Four included a race riot, torture, multiple murders, two trials and a Supreme Court reversal."

5. The Ledger, Lakeland's daily newspaper, published an informative and deeply disturbing series of articles on race in Polk County in September, 2019. To read the series, **Black in Polk**, go to <https://www.theledger.com/story/news/2020/09/23/black-polk-complete-ledger-series/3497002001/>.

6. Since February is Black History Month, many organizations will be holding special events to commemorate it. One source of information is The Ledger: To get information go to <https://www.theledger.com/search/?q=Black+History+Month+>.

Our Own Trinity

Our Christian dogma refers to the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the Trinity. These are three persons in one Godhead. The figure on the left reflects this reality.



Another trinity might be appropriate to our church. The second symbol refers to those we should welcome into our congregation. Unfortunately, we are heavy on mature-of-age Christians, yet slight in youth and young adults with children. We need to develop programs to attract the latter two groups to join us in worshiping and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Continued on the next page . . .



Our Own Trinity, Continued

If our congregation is to live into the future, we must ensure continuity of worship by those growing through the generations.

For FY 2021 we are including the requirement for a Youth Director in our budget. It may take time for us to find a candidate to fill this position. Additionally, with COVID-19 and the coming vaccinations, it will likely be at least mid-year before we could start programs to support this demographic. But, we see the need to move in this direction.

Your suggestions as to how we might accomplish our goal of encouraging participation of younger worshipers would be most welcome. Send them to office@lakegibsonumc.com.

Thank you, Dave McPherson, for the illustrations.

Dwight Kitchens, Finance Committee Chair

Lay Servant Advanced Course

Accountable Discipleship: Living in the Household of God

Online via Zoom - March 9 – April 6, 2021 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm with Rod Groom, instructor

This course may be taken **by anyone** interested in living as a follower of Jesus Christ in loving accountability with others. For those who have taken the Lay Servant Basic Course, it may be taken as an Advanced Course for certification or recertification.

Accountable Discipleship is how disciples of Jesus Christ live in God's household. It is the living of God's "household rules" in their daily lives. When asked, Jesus told us that these rules can be summarized as *loving God and loving our neighbors*. Looking at our biblical and Wesleyan heritage, the author shows us how we can meet the challenge of personal discipleship in loving connection with others, whether in Covenant Discipleship groups, Emmaus Reunion groups, cell groups or other small groups in the church.

Course fee: \$25.00 to be paid at time of registration. Please have a Bible, notebook and pen convenient next to your computer. It is recommended that for class work, you use a Windows or Mac computer, and download the free Zoom software in advance. You must complete all sessions to receive course credit.

Materials: Please purchase and read the book prior to class. The book is entitled *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God's Household*, by Steven Manskar. You may purchase it at [Cokesbury](#) or [Upper Room Books](#).

Click here <https://florida-reg.brtaapp.com/AdvancedLayServantMinistryCourse71> to register for this course. *Credit card payment will be required upon registration.*

Deadline for registration is 3/1/2021. Contact Rod Groom for any questions you may have at rod.groom@icloud.com.

Book Review

Yes, Your Butt Still Belongs in Church: Answering the Excuses That Block Mankind from Having Life and Having It More Abundantly

Author Danny Tyree has been writing a satirical weekly column, *Tyrades!*, since 1998, starting with two local Tennessee papers. Since 2010 *Tyrades!* has been distributed nationwide by the Cagle Cartoons syndicate. He has also taught adult Bible classes for 40 years and is a deacon. This is his first motivational/inspirational book.

This book will be helpful for a wide range of people:

1. Lifelong Christians who are deeply concerned by the decline of church membership and attendance.
2. People who were raised in the church, but have drifted away over the years, and are now searching for a way to come back.
3. Seekers, people who grew up outside of organized religion, who are looking for God, truth or the meaning/purpose of life.

Section 2 of the book lists 38 excuses for not participating in church. Some of us have given them, and most of us have heard them, over the years. Section 3 has specific actions that church members, pastors and even those outside of church can take to reverse the decline of God's church.

The writing is lively and entertaining -- more so than most religious books we've been reading during this time of COVID. If you would like to take a look at it to see if you're interested, call Dwight Kitchens (863-984-4564). You can order your own copy from Amazon (\$14.95 plus tax). It's not available from the Polk County library system.

Sidewalk Sale

We will prepare for the Sidewalk Sale on Thursday, February 25th, at 6:00 pm (meet at the FLC). Call Lynn Meske (863-858-3589) to volunteer to help or to donate items (storage is still limited).

The sale will be **Friday, February 26, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm** and **Saturday, February 27, 8:00 am to noon** (masks and social distancing required).

Transit Equity Days (February 3rd and 4th) Address Racial, Economic and Climate Justice

As we honor the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we remember the work he did alongside Rosa Parks, whose birthday is February 4th. Rosa Parks worked to make public transportation accessible for all. Rosa Parks' faith inspired and undergirded her prophetic witness. "I learned people should stand up for their rights, just as the Children of Israel stood up to the Pharaoh," she once commented.

Transit equity is not only an expression of our faith call to seek racial justice and economic justice, but it is key to advancing climate justice. **The transportation sector is the main source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.**

Limited access to affordable public transportation disproportionately affects communities of color and low-income communities – the same communities that experience a higher burden of negative impacts from air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to making public transit accessible and affordable for all, we can work toward cleaner air and healthier communities by advancing public transit that is powered by clean and renewable energy.

As people of faith, we have an opportunity to lift our voices in support of transit equity. Are you someone who relies on public transportation to get to work, school, or church? Are you a transit worker? Would you use public transit if it was more affordable and more accessible? Are you part of a community that is impacted by air pollution from vehicles powered by unclean energy?

You can learn more about Transit Equity Days [here](#).

[Source: Email from climatejustice@unitedmethodistwomen.org, January 20, 2021, 5:26 pm. Sent by Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee, Office of Economic and Environmental Justice and Erin Hancock, Just Energy for All Coordination Consultant, United Methodist Women]

Florida Conference's EarthKeeper Training and Creation Justice Movement

The Florida UMC has launched a Creation Justice Movement, and the United Methodist Women are continuing their Climate Justice initiative with the emphasis on Just Energy 4 All. On **Friday, January 29th at 7:00 pm**, the FLUMC's Creation Care Team will present the training needed to set up a Creation Care Ministry in local churches. **This training is free.** Due to the lateness in announcing this January event, by the time you receive this newsletter, it will probably be too late to participate in this event, but we expect this will be the first of many meetings on Creation Justice.

Quoting from the Eventbrite announcement by Cara Fleischer, Task Team Chair (cares4creation@gmail.com): "The purpose of this training is to equip Florida UMC members, clergy and staff with the information they need to get started in this joyful ministry, and to learn about the tools available through the Florida Conference.

"You will learn how to: Form a Green Team -- Calculate Your Carbon Footprint -- Make a Plan -- Take Action -- Report Your Progress -- Celebrate in Worship

"The training will also offer Creation Care-focused prayers, breakout sessions, plenty of time for Q&A and more.

[The first 100] "Attendees will receive a free Kindle copy of *7 Simple Steps to Green Your Church*" by Rebekah Simon-Peter."

To learn more and keep informed of the processes and progress, go to the Creation Care Connection Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FLUMCCreationCare/>.

LGUMC has already begun reducing our carbon footprint due to electrical energy consumption by changing out fluorescent lights and installing LED lights throughout the campus.

Introducing Eat, Pray, Grow - EarthKeepers Lunch Meetings

There was an online **Eat, Pray, Grow** meeting on January 26th. The FLUMC Creation Care Task Team welcomed Rev. Jenny Phillips who shared the **status of the national Creation Justice movement** and explained the benefits of the **UMC EarthKeepers** training designed for clergy and laity who are ready to dive deeper into Creation Care ministry. The conference has two new EarthKeepers, Sara Nussel and Kim Wendt. [EarthKeepers is under the leadership of The United Methodist Church Global Ministries, <https://umcmmission.org/EarthKeepers>.]

Read more about the newest EarthKeepers here: <https://umcmmission.org/.../new-class-of-global.../>. As of this writing, the Gulf Central District does not have a member on the Creation Care Task Team. At Eat, Pray, Grow meetings you can: EAT your lunch during the call; PRAY for creation and receive spiritual nourishment and hope; and GROW in Creation Care leadership with access to tools, training, and Florida-specific advocacy.

Eat Pray Grow is a monthly lunch-time Zoom meeting of EarthKeepers and others interested in Creation Care. They meet every month on the 4th Tuesday at noon (ET). Currently scheduled meetings will be on **February 23rd, March 23rd, April 27th, May 25th, June 22nd and July 27th**. Contact Cara Fleischer, Creation Care Task Team leader, (cares4creation@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link.

If you had a heart for the environmental movement from the 1960's, or if *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* are tattooed on your chest, this is the mission for you. Even if you don't sign up for EarthKeeper training and certification, there is much we can all do to reduce our carbon footprint and heal the damage humans have done to our planet.

Help Pakistan Minority Rights Commission (PMRC) Build a Safe House

Imagine a child, raped and trafficked. Now imagine their family refusing them and banning them to the streets. You can be part of their refuge by helping build a new Safe House in Pakistan.

The stigma of rape will destroy the life of a child in Pakistan. Not only the life of the child, but the family as well if the child is not removed from the family, no matter what the age of the child. And yet rape and abandonment continue, with no permanent place of refuge for these young lives -- until now.

The Pakistan Minority Rights Commission (PMRC) in cooperation with the Make It Count Foundation, Inc. are raising funds to build a Safe House on land already secured. This building will be used as a school and training facility during the day and a Safe House at night for these abandoned children to find safety and refuge from those who would do them harm.

We would appreciate your donation to help make this happen. You can make a donation online to PMRC's safe house construction by going to the Make It Count Foundation's web site: <https://makeitcount.kartra.com/page/DEMO>.

Ninety-five percent of the money donated through this site goes to the PMRC safe house project. Make It Count Foundation, Inc. is a Florida non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization; Federal Tax ID#: 20-5367324.

If you have any questions, contact Junaid Saqib, 863-500-2173. The PMRC's Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/pmrcofficialreg/>.

Alternatively, send your contribution to Lake Gibson UMC (with a note: PMRC Safe House) and we will send it to PMRC.

[Article requested by Junaid Saqib and based on information from the PMRC Facebook page, an email from Junaid and the Make It Count website.]

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

Cancer in the Black Community: A Research Update

On **Thursday, February 11th, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm** Moffitt Cancer Center will host a virtual presentation on cancer research specific to African-Americans. *Guest speaker Lansing C. Scriven, Esq, P.A., will talk about his personal story as a prostate cancer survivor.*

There will also be breakout sessions covering ovarian, pancreatic and prostate cancers led by Moffitt medical experts.

To register to participate in this free video presentation, go to https://give.moffitt.org/site/R?i=8fiH-KTgCTrlsqsk12_9oA.

[Source: Email from Moffitt Cancer Center (Foundationinfo@moffitt.org), 25 January 2021, at 12:44 pm]

Food Pantry Needs

We thank everyone who faithfully 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
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Florida United Methodist Children's Home (FUMCH)



Did you know Florida was the first state to develop quality standards for group homes? The standards help ensure residential care provides a positive, safe environment for children. Now Florida's concept for Quality Residential Care is a national model. [Source: FUMCH Facebook page] FUMCH is still under COVID-19 safety restrictions.

Phyllis and Dwight Kitchens
LGUMC FUMCH Reps

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, individually packaged (single serving) 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 set up delivery to Hope House (863-327-2893).

Resources to Learn More about Racism and Anti-Racism

During this pandemic many of us are stuck at home, often because of "underlying conditions". Trying to fill your day with worthwhile endeavors may be difficult. And, I for one, watch WAAY too many Hallmark love stories and mysteries on television.

I would like to encourage you to find a comfortable chair, get a good reading light, and sit down this year to study about that subject called racism. Being Caucasian, I didn't give much thought to "white privilege" and it didn't seem to directly affect me. But the more I look at our society over the past year, the more I understand the perspective of other races and ethnic groups. While I may not agree with everyone else's perspective, reading helps me to understand where they are coming from.

The following books have been enlightening reads, although difficult, sometimes gut-wrenching, at times. There are many others which I have not touched to date. This is not an exhaustive list; they are often available for loan from the Polk County Library Cooperative (mypclc.com), or for purchase from www.Amazon.com or www.ThriftBooks.com. They are listed in no special order, so look at them based on your interest. Dwight Kitchens [with comments by Phyllis Kitchens, editor]

The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism (available from www.mypclc.org)

Takes you on a historical, sociological, and religious journey from America's early colonial days through slavery and the Civil War. Also covers the tragedy of Jim Crow laws, the victories of the Civil Rights era, and the strides of today's Black Lives Matter movement. The author, Jemar Tisby, reveals the cultural and institutional tables we have to flip in order to bring about meaningful integration. It charts a path forward to replace established patterns and systems of complicity with bold, courageous, immediate action. This is a perfect book for pastors and other faith leaders, students, non-students, book clubs, small group studies, history lovers, and all lifelong learners. [One of the two books I found most impactful. Editor]

The Cross and the Lynching Tree (available from www.mypclc.org)

The cross and the lynching tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African-American community. In this powerful book, the late theologian James H. Cone, explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of Black folk. Both the cross and the lynching tree represent the worst in human beings, and at the same time a thirst for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning. While the lynching tree symbolized white power and Black death, the cross symbolizes divine power and Black life; God overcoming the power of sin and death. For African-Americans, the image of Jesus, hung on a tree to die, powerfully grounded their faith that God was with them, even in the suffering of the lynching era. [This is the second book that I recommend everyone read to learn more about racial injustice in America. If you only have time to read only one book on racism, read is it. Editor]

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism (available from www.mypclc.org)

This *New York Times* best-selling book explores the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality. Antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and "allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to 'bad people'" (Claudia Rankine). Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively. [Quotes from the book's back cover and book reviews.] Continued on the next page . . .

Resources to Learn More about Racism and Anti-Racism, Continued

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide (available from www.mypcllc.org)

White Rage reframes our continuing conversation about race, chronicling the powerful forces opposed to Black progress in America [quoted from Google.com]. Carol Anderson, PhD, is a noted historian, Charles Howard Candler Professor and Chair of African-American Studies at Emory University.

How To Be An Antiracist (available from www.mypcllc.org)

Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism—and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value. Its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class and culture and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves. In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas — from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities—that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves. This is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society. [Quotes from the book's front cover]

I'm Black I'm Christian I'm Methodist: (available from www.mypcllc.org)

Ten Black women and men who are Methodist ministers explore life through the lens of compelling personal religious narratives. They are people and leaders whose lives are tangible demonstrations of the power of a divine purpose and evidence of what grace really means in face of hardship, disappointment, and determination. Each of the journeys intersect because of three central elements that are the focus of this book. We're Black. We're Christians. We're Methodists. Each starts with the fact, "I'm Black," but to resolve the conflict of being Christian and Methodist means confronting aspects of white theology, white supremacy, and white racism in order to ground an oppositional experience toward domination over four centuries in America. [Chapter one (by editor Rudy Rasmus) and chapter nine (by F. Willis Johnson) were the most impactful to me. Editor]

So You Want to Talk about Race: (available from www.mypcllc.org)

Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy -- from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans -- has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair -- and how do you make it right? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend? Author Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to "model minorities" in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life. [Quoted from book's back cover]

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents (an Oprah's Book Club selection) (available from www.mypcllc.org) *As we go about our daily lives, caste is the wordless usher in a darkened theater, flashlight cast down in the aisles, guiding us to our assigned seats for a performance. The hierarchy of caste is not about feelings or morality. It is about power—which groups have it and which do not.* In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings. [Quoted from BookBrowse.com review] [I thought caste was something that only applied to India; learned that we have an economic and racial caste system here that goes unnoticed by most of us. Editor] Dwight Kitchens [with comments by Phyllis Kitchens, Editor]

Just Energy 101: Learn about Just Energy and How You Can Help Others

3-Part Educational Seminar Starts February 22nd, 3:00 pm

Why Just Energy for All?



Did you know that 80% of people being displaced by climate change are women? Climate change exacerbates the existing injustices of economic inequity and racism, meaning that low-income communities and communities of color carry a disproportionate burden of negative impacts. Industrial power plants, the nation's largest source of greenhouse gas pollution, are responsible for 31% of total greenhouse emissions in the U.S., making our energy economy the leading culprit in climate displacement and change.

Is the energy you use *just*? Do you know where your energy is coming from and who it's harming? Are all types of renewable energy just? What does it mean to advance just energy for all centered on justice and equity? United Methodist Women invites you to join the **free** Just Energy for All 101 3-part class on **February 22nd, March 8th, and March 22nd at 3:00 pm Eastern Time (ET)** to learn more about the Just Energy for All campaign, why just energy for all is fundamental to our faith, and how you can get involved.

Register here: <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/just-energy-for-all>.

As United Methodist Women and people of faith, we believe that it is our biblical call to care for all of God's creation, particularly the most vulnerable. Just energy for all is about ensuring that the energy we use every day for transportation, powering our homes, and cooking our meals is not harmful to our neighbors and our planet. While this is not guaranteed within our current energy system, just energy for all is possible! And **people of faith can be part of the solution.**

Learn more about the *why* and *what* of United Methodist Women's Just Energy for All campaign, as well as *how* your UMW unit, district or conference can be involved. These 90-minute webinars will include presentations, breakout sessions, and opportunities to connect with other UMW members and people of faith. **You don't need to be a UMW member [or a woman] to participate — all are welcome!**

Part 1 (2/22/21): Why Just Energy for All? Why should United Methodist Women and people of faith care about just energy for all?

Part 2 (3/8/21): What is Just Energy for All? Fossil fuels? Solar? Wind? All renewable energy? Nuclear?

Part 3 (3/22/21): How do we advance Just Energy for All? How can United Methodist Women and people of faith be part of the solution?

Phyllis Kitchens

Excerpts from What Is Christian Nationalism?

By Ryan Dunn, Minister of Online Engagement at United Methodist Communications

Article excerpt courtesy of [The United Methodist Church's Rethink Church](https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-christian-nationalism) community whose outreach shares how when we open ourselves to God's love, we find love, faith and joy. Through sharing experiences, stories and the spirit of God's love, they work to create community with seekers, doubters, skeptics, and all those who feel like we don't have it all together. [To read the entire article go to <https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-christian-nationalism>.]

"Jesus. Guns. Trump." So read one sign held aloft in a crowd of insurrectionists outside the United States Capitol building on January 6, 2021. What do these words have to do with each other? For many people, very little, if anything at all.

"Christian nationalism identifies the nation with God's will and action in the world; conflates national and Christian identity; and identifies service of the nation with service of God," writes Dr. David W. Scott, who is a Methodist historical researcher and the Director of Mission Theology at the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. **"Christian nationalism gives moral cover for actions, even unseemly ones, taken in pursuit of national or political goals."** [Emphasis added by editor.]

Dr. Kristin Kobes Du Mez, author of *Jesus and John Wayne*, takes the idea that Christian nationalism provides moral cover a step further, noting that Christian nationalism adheres to "the belief that America is God's chosen nation and must be defended as such."

Those who hold to a Christian nationalist view assume a religious duty in defending their beliefs in regards to the nation. So many of those who stormed the U.S. Capitol felt quite natural in holding up "Jesus 2020" and "Jesus Saves!" banners. They believed their actions were a defense of the nation and therefore sanctioned by God.

The events of January 6, 2021, expose the dangers of Christian nationalism. Uniting a religious fervor with domestic events incites a passion and sense of priority that many of us consider out of place -- especially those of us in the Christian sphere who reject a Christian nationalist perspective. **National priorities are simply not equal to the priorities of God.** [Emphasis added] We become acutely aware of this when we have disagreements over what our national priorities are.

Many of those who stormed the Capitol did so under a presumption they were defending democracy. The rest of us believe they were trying to overturn democracy. To assume that one side works on behalf of God, while the other works in rejection of Divine order, is a perversion of the unity that *could* exist in, at least, recognizing shared spiritual ideals. That spiritual unity cannot exist when we suggest that true Christians either wear red hats and carry "Don't Tread on Me" flags or do not.

The danger is in conflating [fusing together into one entity] our Christian identity and our national identity. We can be Christian, we can also be American. But to assume that being American means being Christian and that being Christian means holding to a narrow view of what it means to be American is limiting to all of the above.

Dr. Scott noted "There's a long history of Christian nationalism in the United States, and it has often been the type of nationalism that tries to exclude others. American Christian nationalism has tried to define the United States as a native white Protestant nation and exclude all others: Catholics, African-Americans, indigenous peoples, immigrants, Jews, Muslims, etc."

So Christian nationalism limits who we are in our spiritual identity and who we are in our American identity. And it runs the even more dangerous route towards a belief that the nation is infallible. **Christian nationalism makes an idol of the nation** - - the country becomes an interchangeable object of worship. We believe we serve God by serving the country.

Continued on the next page . . .

Excerpts from What Is Christian Nationalism?, Continued

Why is Christian nationalism appealing?

Dr. Scott believes an appeal exists for both Christians to be nationalists and for nationalists to feel a pull towards Christianity. “Being able to root your nationalist beliefs in a religion that gives those beliefs a sense of ultimate reality is very appealing. Political leaders have used religion for their own ends throughout history,” he noted.

Aligning nationalistic ideologies with religious belief grants them a sense of importance and legitimacy. Turning nationalist thoughts into religious beliefs moves them from being political opinions to standards of faith. So those who are looking to provide a base for legitimizing their political opinions find value in claiming that their thoughts are established through Divine order.

Take, for example, Jesus’ instructions to his disciples to buy a sword in Luke 22:35-38.

He said to them, ‘When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?’ They said, ‘No, not a thing.’ He said to them, ‘But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, “And he was counted among the lawless”; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.’ They said, ‘Lord, look, here are two swords.’ He replied, ‘It is enough.’

A proponent of gun ownership could look at this verse and declare that Jesus teaches us to arm ourselves. The story lends religious legitimacy to a political persuasion. . . .

What can we do about Christian nationalism?

According to Dr. Scott, “the best safeguard against religious nationalism that I know of is learning from Christians (and others) who are different from you.” We begin to safeguard against Christian nationalism by adopting a mindset that our spiritual and human identity supersedes our national identity. “Learning to see God in others who are outside our sense of who comprises our nation or our in-group reminds us that God is bigger than any political or social group.”

One way to keep the lesson of human connection before us is to engage in mission work -- or the work of representing God’s love and mercy to others. “Mission, because it involves interactions by Christians across national and cultural boundaries, has historically been one of the most important means for facilitating this type of encounter and mutual learning, though it can happen in other ways too,” noted Dr. Scott.

“Christianity also has a lot of theological resources for thinking of ourselves as citizens of heaven and siblings to all other humans, not partisans of a particular national group,” he continued. Joining in the process of extending God’s grace across cultural borders is a meaningful way of witnessing to the extended family of faith. You can learn more by reading about mission work and the global community of faith at umglobal.org.

Used with permission. [Some paragraphs omitted to fit the space available and bold typeface added to highlight key ideas.]

Hope House Upgrade

In the past Hope House has been given used commercial equipment which, from time to time, broke down. Eventually their old ice maker became irreparable. For a number of months, Hope House has had to rely on purchased bags of ice to cool beverages.

After discussions with Hope House volunteers about the amount of ice used each day they are open, it was determined that a smaller, more efficient unit than the old one would meet their needs. The new ice maker was delivered on January 12th, donated by some members of Lake Gibson UMC. The ice maker belongs to LGUMC and if Hope House should close sometime in the future, the unit will revert to our church.



Hope House Happenings (Excerpts from HH Volunteer Reports)

WEDNESDAY, December 30, 2020 at Hope House - Geri Mayo [Due to illness Hope House was closed several days the end of December and beginning of January 2021.]

Laura created 20 (5-day) meal kits and dropped them off on Tuesday. Debbie and Rick made sure everyone received a kit to tide them over the next couple of days.

TUESDAY, January 5, 2021 at HOPE CENTER - Debbie and Rick McLellan

Our day started with the discovery of a young, deceased, homeless man in the woods between the Hope Center and the car wash. Some of our guests said his nickname was PJ, but he had no ID. We called the Sheriff's office, then the whole day we had numerous Sheriff's office vehicles and flashing lights out front. Rick McLellan led in prayer, which included PJ, and a devotion from 1 Corinthians 15, SPEND ETERNITY WITH JESUS.

Today, Chef Dick McPherson, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, served his wonderful pulled pork, macaroni salad, and cole slaw. Our brown to-go bag of sides included a ham and cheese sandwich, a bag of pretzels, a pudding cup, a diced peaches cup and a small bag of M&Ms. To quench thirst was ice cold bottled water with optional flavoring packet. 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 18 guests today, probably down from our normal attendance due to activity by the Sheriff's office. We will have to wait for conclusion of the investigation by PCSO, but it appeared to be a drug overdose which killed PJ.

Debbie was busy and gave out masks, toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, socks, camping toilet paper and Band-Aids. She also counseled and consoled a number of guests who were upset. Thanks to a donation of a friend, we were able to furnish Cody Kingsley with a new pair of steel-toed boots for a job he has lined up. We received a donation of a number of items from churches, including Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. We also had a visit from Harry Card, a military veteran who has also served as a Hope Center volunteer. He brought lots of laundry detergent and coffee. Our guests had the cloud of the death of an acquaintance on their minds today. We are grateful for your prayers for all our guests and volunteers.

WEDNESDAY, January 6, 2021 at Hope House - Lori, Leslie and Laura

We started our day taking everyone's temperature to be sure our guests were all feeling well and did not have a fever. It was a sunny day with our guests spread out in the front yard. Lori bought a case of water, a scrumptious stuffed French toast breakfast along with a delicious pineapple cheese cake and peanut butter brownies. Yum!

Laura cooked bratwurst, baked beans and corn served up with a tossed salad. Leslie was busy in our boutique and helping our guests choose clothing items, toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, socks, and whatever else was needed.



We ALL had to counsel and console a number of guests who were still upset about PJ. We asked all of our guests if they knew the Lord and if they had a relationship with him. They all responded yes! We had a time for prayer requests, (pray for a man named Dale with heart issues; pray for all of today's homeless guests, and prayers for PJ's family). Praying also for Geri's return to good health. We miss you, Geri.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

WEDNESDAY, January 6, 2021 at Hope House - Lori, Leslie and Laura

One of our guests, Genna, was upset because I (Laura) chose to serve food to Jennifer who has been trespassed! I explained to her that I will NEVER let anyone go hungry, and I am well within my right to feed her and give her mail to her. She was fed and left with no problems. She did not go near anyone and was respectful to collect food and leave! I always follow the rule of "What would Jesus Do?"

Thank you Jesus for allowing us to serve our less fortunate with love, kindness and dignity!

WEDNESDAY, January 13, 2021 at the Hope House - Lori and Laura

We started the day checking everyone in and taking temperatures and giving out masks. Our guests were spread out throughout the day and social distanced really well. Lori brought in waffles for breakfast and we also served cereal and milk. For lunch, Laura made spaghetti and meatballs with green beans and cream of mushroom soup served up with fresh dinner rolls.

We had a few people stop by with some donations of 3 tents (which we dispersed right away) and a few bags of clothes. We made sure everyone had some warm clothes and blankets for this evening. We had a total of 20 guests with 9 wanting showers and 6 doing laundry.

Laura also gave out many boxer shorts and socks along with underclothes for the ladies. Everyone was given a to-go dinner with cookies. Lori fed the kitties. After our guests left, Lori and I cleaned up and threw all the trash in the dumpster. A beautiful, peaceful day was had by all.

On a side note, the gate is really in need of repair. The bottom is coming apart and may not open and close well in the future. Laura spotted a roach upon entering the house this morning.

TUESDAY, January 19, 2021 at HOPE CENTER - Debbie and Rick McLellan

Today was busy with 23 guest sign-ins. Rick McLellan led in prayer and brought a devotion from I John 3, OUR PERSONAL GOD. This week our wonderful meal was provided by Hampton and Sharon Conway from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. Our guests enjoyed a delicious chili, cornbread, and terrific large chocolate chip cookies. Debbie was busy and gave out toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, camping toilet paper, masks and Band-Aids. Clothing items, shoes, socks, blankets, and jackets were provided for our guests.

We had a number of wonderful people drop in to see us and bring us items that were just what we hoped for to meet our guests' needs. A special thanks to Julio Santana and Lilia Harbaugh for extraordinary assistance.

We appreciate your prayers for all of our volunteers and our guests. God is working at the Hope Center! Thank you Jesus!

WEDNESDAY, January 20, 2021 at Hope House - Laura Webb, Lori Riddle and Geri Mayo

It was a busy day with 23 guests signing in; 11 guests used the shower and 3 guests used the laundry facility. Lori assisted our guests with finding clothes, making sure everyone was able to use the shower, and providing hygiene products.

Breakfast consisted of a breakfast casserole made by Lori; scrambled eggs made by Laura and a variety of cold cereals. Bottled water and coffee were the beverage choices. The Hope House kitties, Mama Cat and Niko, enjoy their alfresco breakfast.

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Hope House Happenings, Continued

WEDNESDAY, January 20, 2021 - Laura, Lori and Geri, Continued

Our special guests today were Pastor Norman Walker and Becky Brigman from Fuel Baptist Church. Pastor Norm provided the devotional. He told the guests about his trip to Israel and how it felt to be where Jesus lived. Our folks were very attentive.

Laura made a delicious lunch of ham and extra-cheesy mac and cheese. There were several desserts available. Soda and bottled water were the beverage choices.

Note for the other volunteers: the patio gate is still broken and great care is needed to open and close it. The middle inside dryer is still broken.

Lake Gibson Church of the Nazarene will hold a service here on Sunday, January 24th.

It was a very peaceful day. Our guests seemed very appreciative for everything provided to them.



Birthdays in February

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
2/2	Lonnie Brady
2/3	Carol Troup
2/3	Tim Watson
2/4	Sandi Harwell
2/5	Emma Davidson
2/6	Yvonne Bower
2/6	Edward Chambers
2/6	Sharon Moake
2/10	Betty Jennings

Continued . . .

Birthdays in February, Continued

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
2/11	Jimmie Gunther
2/11	Geri Mayo
2/15	Logan Oliva
2/15	Maria Thomas
2/16	Doug Harwell
2/16	Trevor Watson
2/16	Wayne Wesley
2/17	William Anderson
2/17	Mary Lou Barrell
2/17	Junaid Saqib
2/21	Brandon Oliva
2/21	Courtney Wilkinson
2/23	Rita Fredrikson
2/26	Larry Gitt
2/26	Linda Imel



Anniversaries in February

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
2/11	Ruth and Henry Zona
2/12	Laurel and Jack Vanderheyden