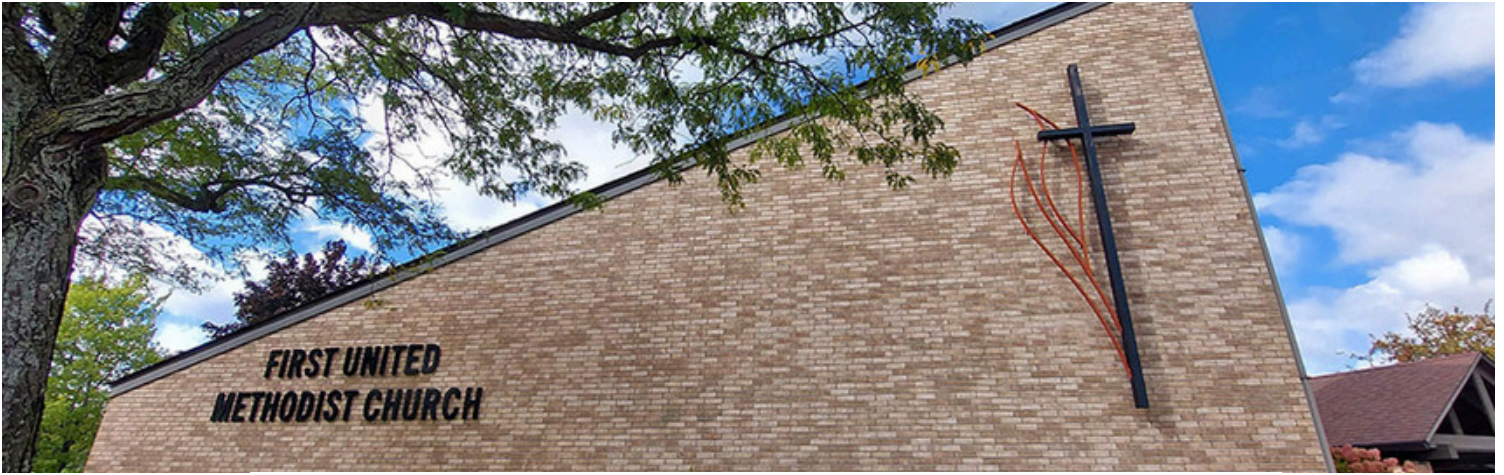




# Living By Faith



## *From the Pastor's Desk*

### FROM WISCONSIN'S LATE WINTER TO THE GLORY OF EASTER

Outside the window, the biting chill of the wind still lingers. March in Wisconsin is a season of beautiful contradiction. One day, the golden sun warms the earth, tempting us to believe that spring has finally arrived and inviting us to shed our heavy coats. Yet, in the blink of an eye, a sudden snowstorm sweeps through, forcing us to pull our zippers tight once again. This tug-of-war between the lingering frost and the promise of warmth—a dance of coming and going—is a profound mirror of our own spiritual journey.

Though the stubborn silence of winter seems unshakable, the sap of life is already beginning to stir beneath the frozen ground. We find ourselves in the heart of Lent, retracing the humble footsteps of Christ toward the shadow of the Cross. But we do not journey without hope; this season of patient endurance leads us toward the radiant dawn of Easter, where the victory of life over death is declared once and for all.

#### **1. MARCH & LENT: THE ART OF EMPTYING TO EMBRACE CHRIST**

Lent is often misunderstood as merely a time of somber deprivation or legalistic fasting. In truth, its essence lies in “spiritual decluttering” quieting the noise of the “self” so that we can finally hear the whisper of God.



A master potter spends as much time hollowing out the inside of a vessel as he does shaping its exterior. No matter how beautiful a jar may be, if it is clogged with debris or already filled to the brim, it is useless to its owner.

Our lives are no different. If we are crowded with worldly anxieties, the weight of comparison, or insatiable desires, there is no room for the grace of God to dwell. John 3:30 reminds us: **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** This Lent, let us practice "emotional minimalism"—stripping away the unnecessary burdens of the ego to create a hollow space where Christ's love can truly settle.

## **2. APRIL & EASTER: LIFE BLOOMING FROM THE PLACE OF DEATH**

As we pass through the long tunnel of Lent—and the seemingly endless Wisconsin winter—we eventually emerge into the brilliant light of Easter. Resurrection is not just a historical event from two thousand years ago; it is a living, breathing power that restores our broken realities today.

In the depths of a Wisconsin forest, the trees look skeletal and lifeless against the gray sky. Yet, even in sub-zero temperatures, they are gathering strength deep within their roots, preparing for the breakthrough of spring.

Just as the profound darkness of the Cross was the necessary prelude to the glory of the Resurrection, no hardship in our lives is ever wasted in the hands of God. Romans 8:28 promises that **"all things work together for good to those who love God."** Are you currently walking through a winter of the soul? The Risen Lord proclaims that this is not your end, but a new beginning. He who rolled away the stone will surely bring forth new buds of life in your desert.

## **3. FAITH TRANSLATED INTO LIFE: LIVING AS WITNESSES**

Having received the transformative love of the Cross, we are called to translate that love into the language of our daily lives. To believe in the Resurrection is more than just a hope for heaven; it is the courage to bring hope into the places of death and despair here on earth.

- ***The Resurrection of Language: Replace words of criticism and grumbling with words of encouragement and blessing.***
- ***Sharing the Warmth: In this unpredictable weather that tires the body and spirit, be the one to offer a warm cup of coffee or a heartfelt phone call. When we become a source of hope for someone else, the Resurrection becomes a tangible reality in that moment.***

Brothers and sisters, though the cold wind still nips at our heels, we know that the green fields of Wisconsin will soon return. May the quiet prayers of March layer upon one another to become the thunderous Hallelujah of April. Let us remember that there is **"No Cross, No Crown."** With our eyes fixed on the empty tomb, let us continue this race of faith together until the morning breaks.



## **SANCTUARY REMODEL FUNDRAISING UPDATE**

**Yes, we are still fundraising! There is still quite a bit to be done to the music corner in the sanctuary, some that are absolutely needed, some that are wanted and some that are on our wish list. We will keep you updated as to those projects as we proceed forward.**

**Our group hosted a coffee hour a few weeks ago and we will continue to do so. We have another coming up on April 12<sup>th</sup> and two more in the fall. We will, also, be hosting Ice Cream Socials again during the summer.**

**A rummage sale is being planned during the city-wide sales the first weekend of June. We will need volunteers along with items to be donated for sale. We will not be accepting any clothing items.**

**Thank you all for your support! It is greatly appreciated!**

**Connie Speiser and Linda Thompson  
Co-chairs Fundraising Committee**

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**All are invited to attend the ALB meetings held on the third Monday of the month at church at 6:30 p.m.**

**The next Town Hall meeting will be between services on Sunday, April 19th**



# JOIN US Youth Ministry *get involved*



**WE ARE EXCITED TO SHARE THE LATEST HAPPENINGS WITH OUR 6TH-12TH GRADE YOUTH!**

## **YOUTH GROUP HIGHLIGHTS**

In January, we had 7 participants in our **Chili Cookoff and Game Night**, somehow the winning chili was the Youth Leaders'...wonder how that happened??? In February, we gathered for one of our most popular outings – **SkyZone**. The kids love to spend time together jumping in the indoor trampoline park. We are always thankful to be able to finance outings like these because of the generous donations from our church family.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL: EXPLORING THE WORD

The past two months have been filled with learning about the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. The Youth are learning important lessons on how Jesus teaches us to posture our hearts as Christians, both in our thoughts and actions/words. We have spent a lot of time discussing the Beatitudes and how Jesus calls us to be humble, forgiving, and to stand strong in our faith, because to Jesus that is what is “cool.”

***We are currently averaging about 10 youth in attendance each Sunday, and we would love to see that number continue to grow. Please encourage your youth to join us and remember that friends are always welcome! The more, the merrier as we continue to deepen our faith and fellowship together.***



### UPCOMING EVENTS: MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

#### March Youth Group:

In March, we will meet on **Sunday, March 15 from 4:30-7pm for “Dinner and Blanket Making”** in the Youth Room. We will be making blankets to donate to local unhoused families.

#### April Youth Group:

In April, we will meet on **Sunday, April 26 from 4:30-7 pm for “Dinner and a Movie”** in the Youth Room. I will be making spaghetti, and we will have popcorn while we watch a movie together.

### GET INVOLVED

***As always, we’re looking for ways to grow and encourage our youth in their faith and service. If you know any 6th-12th graders who could benefit from these experiences, please invite them to join us!***

***We are looking forward to an exciting and busy end to the year, and we hope to see you and your youth involved in all these wonderful opportunities.***

Blessings,

*Brittany Prange*

Youth Ministry Coordinator

# Children and Family Ministries

Brianna Lee - Children and Family Ministries Director  
brianna.fumc@gmail.com (262)673-3290 ~ (262)709-6071

God is Good and we've made it to false Spring! Our Sunday School kids have really been enjoying digging deeper into their Bibles these past few months. It is so exciting to see them opening their Bibles and actively searching for and reading the verses outloud to each other during our lessons. We are now headed into our Lent lessons learning more about the temptations Jesus faced in the Desert and how we can live more like Jesus in our everyday lives. Our favorite passage this week really resonated with the children. **"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." - Matthew 26:41**

## Important Upcoming Dates

No Sunday School

March 29th

April 4th

May 3rd and May 10th

Noisy Can Collection

— March 15th —

April 19th

May 17th

Save the Date!

May 17<sup>th</sup> - Sunday School Summer Celebration



**JOIN US FOR RAINFOREST FALLS VBS 2026**

**JULY 26TH - JULY 30TH 4:30-7:30PM**

**REGISTRATION OPEN NOW!**

**Participants~4yo-5th grade**

**Youth/Adult Volunteers ~ 6th grade +**

Youth Participant Registration:  
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/2e10ef97-4ea0-4a52-9623-eb2ebb2d0671>

Youth/Adult Volunteer Registration:  
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/djysp3m>

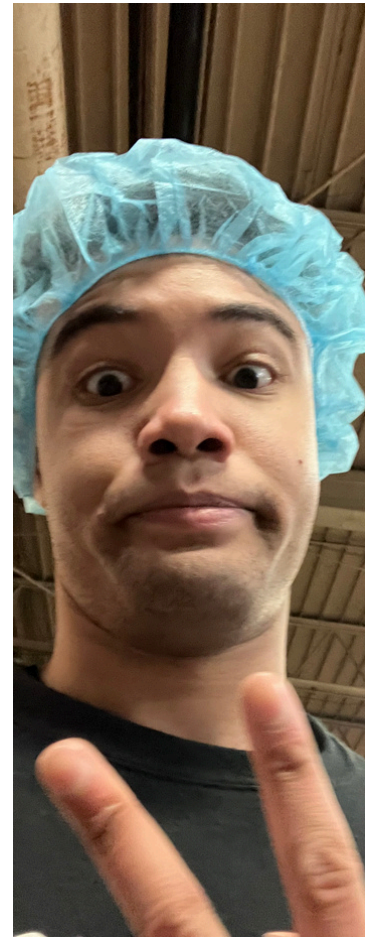


Youth Participants



Youth/Adult Volunteers





## FUMC MEN OF FAITH

### WHAT: SPRECHER BREWERY TOUR

When: Saturday, February 21, 2026

We had 14 member and some non FUMC member attend our Sprecher Factory Tour.

Best part of the tour was the tastings before and after the tour 😊.



# FUMC MEN OF FAITH

## SATURDAY, MARCH 21

EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association)  
museum tour

Handicap accessible Museum

Tour starts at 10:00 AM, Oshkosh

Transportation - Carpool/On your own.

Cost \$12.00 per person,  
everyone is welcome

Lunch will be arranged in Oshkosh following tour (location TBD)

Sign up due to Steven Key by March 15.



## THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Men of Faith monthly meeting

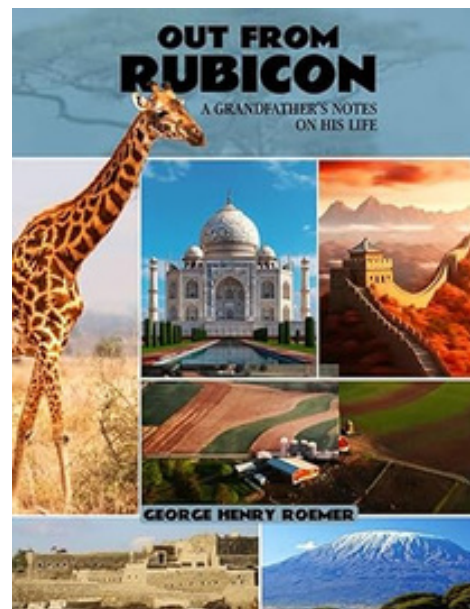
Time 6:30 pm

Fellowship Hall.

TBD who will supply the Spiritual message.



After a brief hiatus our Women in Faith group will again be meeting monthly. Our first meeting of 2026 was held on Monday, March 2nd. Our featured speaker was a local Hartford author and someone we all know — Mr. George Roemer. George shared part of his life with us through his book, *Out From Rubicon - A Grandfather's Notes On His Life*. Copies of George's book are available from Amazon in paperback, hard cover and Kindle.



On **April 6**, Hartford local resident Marilyn Raschka will share her Holy Land experiences over the past 35 years through a presentation entitled **So Many Olive Branches, So Little Peace.**

Blessings to You,

*Cheryl Malko*

# Hospitality Ministry

## LENTEN REFLECTIONS AND BIBLE STUDY

We are thrilled to share that our recent events were both successful, and it was wonderful to welcome some new faces to our gatherings. As we embark on our Lenten journey, let us take time to reflect and become more attentive to those around us who may benefit from the sharing of our faith.

At this time, Karen Bidwell and I are co-leading a **Lenten Bible Study** titled **“Give Up Something Bad for Lent.”** I must say, this study offers a truly refreshing perspective on how we approach the season of Lent. Instead of focusing solely on traditional sacrifices, the study encourages us to give up negative habits—such as envy, jealousy, gossip, blame-shifting, bitterness, apathy, and judgment. It is indeed a challenging list but imagine the impact if each of us were to let go of even one of these habits. Our community—and the world—might become a much kinder place.

### A SCRIPTURAL REMINDER

#### MATTHEW 16:26

**<sup>26</sup> WHAT GOOD WILL IT BE FOR SOMEONE TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, YET FORFEIT THEIR SOUL? OR WHAT CAN ANYONE GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR SOUL?**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### ECUMENICAL LENTEN SOUP SUPPER

The Hospitality team will be sponsoring the **Ecumenical Lenten Soup Supper on March 18<sup>th</sup>**. Dinner will be served from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM, coinciding with the start of the evening service. In preparation for the event, a sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board for ingredient donations and desserts. The featured soup for the evening will be Potato Bacon Corn Chowder.



## RECENT EVENTS

### CRAFT NIGHT-GNOME MAKING EVENT

Our recent Gnome making craft night was a tremendous success! Thirteen enthusiastic crafters joined Jody Key and me for an evening filled with creativity and fun. We are truly grateful to everyone who participated and contributed to making this event memorable. Each attendee enjoyed the opportunity to craft their own unique and adorable gnome, and the atmosphere was joyful and engaging for all involved.



### CHILI COOK OFF

The February Chili Cook Off was another enjoyable event for our church community, despite the unexpected challenge of frozen pipes that forced a cancellation. Thanks to the resilience and enthusiasm of our participants, we were still able to feature ten contestants, each presenting their own unique and delicious chili recipes. Some entries were particularly creative, including Elk chili and Bear chili, which added excitement to the tasting experience. Approximately 40–50 attendees took part in the event, sampling the various chilis, judging their favorites, and sharing a meal together. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this event a success!



### CHILI COOK OFF WINNERS

#### Chicken Chili:

- 1st place – Becky Cleland
- 2nd place – Aiden Pezzino

#### Beef Chili:

- 1st place – Katie Schlotthauer
- 2nd place (tie) – Barb Klockow and Dennis Jones (Bear Chili)

#### Vegetarian Chili:

- 1st place – Heidi Gottfried
- 2nd place – Danielle Pezzino

Blessings ,

*Victoria Triick*

Hospitality Ministry Team Leader

