

The Open Door

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.
We believe in God and in each other.
The People of The United Methodist Church

February 2024 Volume 22 Issue 2



Heart Songs

I have recently started listening to birdsong in the background as I work and have found that it motivates me and lightens my mood. Have you ever just sat and listened to the birds singing away and wondered what they were saying to one another? Wondered what motivates them to sing? I find it particularly noticeable when there is a light rain falling and the birds are happily splashing about, preening and calling out to one another all the while. Songbirds are a visual and aural reminder of the amazing works of God's hands, just as we are. And listening to their songs makes me wonder what makes your heart sing. And what is the song that your heart sings?

In the old hymn *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, the lyrics say that, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free..." Now it is true that caged birds will also sing, as the great Maya Angelou reminded us, but the song of a free bird is something else. And as human beings, we can relate to both types of song. There are times in which we are caged: by fears, by doubts, by regrets, by anger, by sadness, by sin; and our hearts sing a mournful tune. A tune that cries out for relief, for respite, for redemption. And when we are finally granted our freedom from the cages of pain that surround us, we spread our wings and open our hearts and we cannot help but sing a song of joy. And we sing because we are happy; we sing because we are free. And so, my friends, we must consider the cages that we build around ourselves, or that others have built around us; and we must break free from them, throwing wide the bars just as the prison doors busted open for Paul and Silas. And in that moment, we must open our hearts and sing our song of freedom, a song where every voice is lifted until earth and heaven ring with the harmonies of liberty. A song where we let our rejoicing rise up to the listening skies. Let us sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us; a song full of the hope that the present has brought us, as James Weldon Johnson wrote so beautifully in his hymn *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Let us sing our songs, friends, and be free. Amen.

Rev. Lenora Whitecotton

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OUR USHERS:

1st	The Feldpauschs
2nd	The Goeckels
3rd	Bruce & Linda Croel
4th	Bill & Connie Almy



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<i>January Attendance</i>	
Week Of:	Online Facebook Live & In Person Views/Shares/Sign-in
January 7	44 In Person, 12 Online 192 Views/2 Shares
January 14	No In Person, 34 Online 410 Views/ 5 Shares
January 21	65 In Person, 7 Online 180 Views/4 Shares
January 28	74 In Person, 13 Online 187 Views/3 Shares

FEBRUARY SERMON SCHEDULE:
February 4: A Disciples Path - Gifts
February 11: Listen Up!
February 18: Silly Love Songs
February 25: Silly Love Songs– All of Me

News and Notes from the Leadership Board

How did it get to be February already! The Leadership Board recently met for the first time in 2024 and welcomed in new members Carole Schrauben, Diane Willard and Connie Almy. Please pray for the Board as we come together to vision the next year in the life of PUMC. It is an exciting time for us and for our church!

Just a reminder that the Leadership Board is a single board governance. This year the board is comprised of 6 members—we have doubled in size! Apart from discussions revolving around sensitive Staff/Parish topics, our meetings are typically open to the congregation. While the Leadership Board is charged with the strategic planning and visioning for the church, we need the congregation to be an active part of carrying out the ministries and missions of the church. This may include being a part of a task force periodically for projects in the church or joining a ministry team. At any rate, there are plenty of opportunities to serve, connect and grow in your faith journey here at PUMC.

God is GOOD!

Jen Thomas
Leadership Board Chair

Our condolences go out to the families and friends of Audrey Scott, Doris Long and Marylou Tannery

Rest in Peace

Prayer Requests



If you have a concern to be addressed by our prayer chain, please contact the church.

Bruce Daman

Barb Gillis

Bruce Jackson

Sharon (Hill) Longstreth

Amy Kahn

Kelly Mosser

Susan Smith

Diana Spangler

George Becker

Allen Randall

Please contact the office if you would like a name added next month.

Please pray for our Service Men & Women:

Jared Thomas



Please pray for our Homebound

Jean Almy

6876 Reeder Road
Lyons, MI 48851

Bruce Daman

4000 North Michigan Rd
Dimondale, MI 48821

Bud Moyer

4775 Village Dr. Apt 147
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

HELPING HANDS MINISTRY

This ministry was set up many years ago to help people in financial distress. All calls for assistance are referred to the Portland Area Ministerial Association. The person making the request talks with the treasurer of PAMA and fills out a short form detailing the number of persons in the household, how many of these are children, wages of any adults in the home currently employed, and what help he or she may have received from other sources, such as food stamps, 8-Cap, family, or other churches or organizations. When the PAMA treasurer is satisfied that the person meets the criteria set up by PAMA, she sends an email to the representatives from participating churches, telling of the need and including a copy of the form filled out. Each of us decides if and how much our individual church can give to this need. The PAMA treasurer collects the checks and sees that the checks are delivered to the proper place, whether it be a landlord, the City of Portland, Consumers, Tri-County or wherever the payment needs to be made. Persons may only apply for assistance once a year.

In 2023, PUMC helped 40 individuals or families. We generally give \$100 to each request. Sixteen payments were made to help cover bills for rent, seventeen for utilities (electricity, water, gas, propane), three for auto repairs/parts, three for homeless lodging in a hotel, and one for cell phone usage payment. \$4,278. 88 was given from the Helping Hand Fund in 2023.

Income for this same year includes the 2022 Advent Offering of \$1,287.76, \$850 from the Lynda Russman memorial, \$300 in church donations, \$1,111.27 from the 2023 Lenten offering, and a special World Day of Prayer offering of \$803.33. Total income: \$4,352.36. PUMC Helping Hands ended the year with \$153.49 in the account.

If you would like to contribute to the Helping Hands Ministry, you may do so online or make check payable to PUMC and indicate Helping Hands on the memo line. Thank you for your continued support. The needs increase as the cost of living increases.

Inclement Weather Communication

Welcome to winter in Michigan...you just never quite know what you're going to get from day to day! We have already had to cancel Sunday service due to inclement weather once. Hoping to not have to do it again but just in case we have put together a protocol on how this will be communicated to you all.

1. A Flocknote and email blast will be sent to the congregation on Friday alerting them to the potential for inclement weather and to be on the lookout for additional communication no later than 7am Sunday morning if cancellation needs to happen.

2. The Pastor and Leadership chair/board will be in communication Saturday to make a decision on the cancellation of service.

3. When a decision is made to cancel service the information will be disseminated as follows: Flocknote, email, message on Facebook, message on our web site and on Wood TV 8 and WILX . If you haven't seen anything regarding closing by 7am on Sunday morning, then we are having church! Obviously if you feel it is not safe for you to make it in, please stay home and enjoy our Facebook live feed from the safety and comfort of your home!

Any questions, please see Jen Thomas or Pastor Lenora for further discussion.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February Sunday Services:

Worship 9:30 am
Live Worship streamed to Facebook 9:30 am

1st Sunday-of-the-Month Food Drive

February 4th, donations may be left at the church

New Member Class

Ends February 11th, Lounge 10:30 am

2nd Thursday Meals – Monthly

February 8th, Contact Sherry Miller
517-285-0640, sherrymillersings@gmail.com

Ash Wednesday Services

Drive Thru Imposing of Ashes 12:00– 1:00 pm
Evening Service 7:00 pm

Silly Love Songs Study

Begins February 18th, Lounge 10:30 am

Leadership board Meeting

February 20th, Esther Room 7:00 pm

Staff Meeting

February 22nd, Esther Room 6:30 pm

Community Food Bank & Clothes Closet

Mondays 9:00 am - Noon
Thursdays 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Contact Steve @ 616-902-0645 for Food Bank
Contact Linda @ 517-899-9848 for Clothes Closet

Backpacks for Bellies

Delivered Thursdays 9:00 am
Contact Michelle VanSlambrouck @ 517-285-6518

The Soup Project

Tuesdays, Kitchen 9:30 am