

Winter 2024

The First Connection

a publication of

Mason First United Methodist Church

Growing in Faith, Serving Others, Sharing the Love of Christ

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New Every Morning

It's getting lighter a little earlier with every new morning. Have you noticed? We have begun our journey into a new year, leaving behind the joys and challenges of 2023. It's time to write a new story. What is God calling us to do in this new year?

A glance into 2024 gives us a glimpse of opportunities to serve the community even as it previews some challenges to be faced. It will be important for us to remember that we are not only called to be disciples individually, but to be a *people*—to give positive identity and tribute to God as a *fellowship* of faithfulness in this community where God has planted us.

As a church family, we've outlined a purpose that is about individual discipleship and communal purpose: *Growing in Faith, Serving Others, Sharing the Love of Christ*. These three parts of our mission statement are interdependent and the strength of who we are as a church. This new year is an opportunity to renew and strengthen ourselves for serving God, and it all begins with a commitment to grow in faith. How are we stretching, growing, and deepening our relationship with God? What personal disciplines and communal practices are we undertaking to know God better, and to live by God's direction?

New every morning is an opportunity to draw closer to God and to discern God's purpose for our lives. Today, take a moment to contemplate your relationship with God and consider how you will open yourself to greater discipleship in this year to come. God be with you and bless you abundantly in this new year!

Pastor Suzanne

Ash Wednesday Service of Worship

Wednesday, February 14 7:00 p.m.

God is With Us

A Season of Lent

Growing in Faith, Serving Others, & Sharing the Love of Christ

Ash Wednesday Worship

Simon Peter - A Study by Adam Hamilton

God is still with us - A Personal Lenten Devotional

Night of a Thousand Blessings—March 17

Holy Week March 24-31

GROWING IN FAITH

God is With Us

Lent is a season specifically made for growing closer to God through the gift of Jesus Christ. This year, our Lenten theme will be based on a personal devotion guide called *God Is Still With Us*. You'll be able to pick up one of these guides and use it to creatively discover the ways that God has reached out to you and to all of us through Jesus. We'll also be offering an opportunity for you to see yourself in the relationship between Simon Peter and Jesus with a book study by Adam Hamilton. And through meaningful worship experiences, we'll open ourselves to recognizing God's presence in our own lives. Take advantage of this holy season of Lent to grow in faith and grow closer to God.



Join us for an engaging study of the relationship between Simon Peter and Jesus, and consider how Jesus invites us into discipleship even with our own flaws and imperfections. This dynamic six-week study uses Adam Hamilton's book, and is supplemented by his video filmed at the very locations where Peter and Jesus interacted. Led by Marti Abbott, this study meets Tuesday evenings at 6:30 from February 20 through March 26. Sign up at the Connection Point to get your book. This is a class you won't want to miss!



Join us for Christian conversation and perspective on current events every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. in the Chapel. No homework or preparation required! Everyone is welcome!

Wednesday Bible Study

New books have arrived for a new year of Bible Study! Our group meets weekly to read together *The Disciplined Disciple*. Drop in any time to read scripture and discuss its meaning. Whether you are just starting out in your faith journey or have been pursuing it for years, we'd love to have you! Anyone, in any stage of growth can experience growth from these spiritual disciplines. We meet **every Wednesday, from 10:30– 11:30 a.m. in the library.**

A Personal Walk With

This year, we are offering a personal devotion guide for your Lenten journey. Corresponding with our worship theme for Lent, this interactive workbook will invite you to engage the active presence of God through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The booklet offers short lessons, space for you to reflect and journal, or even to draw, doodle, and be creative as you consider how, in Jesus, God chose to be with us and experience life alongside us, ultimately conquering the ultimate challenges of our lives through his love and grace. Sign up at the Connection Point to get your devotional. A donation of \$5 to cover the cost of printing is appreciated!



United
Women
in Faith

Who are the United Women in Faith? UWF is a fellowship of women whose purpose is to *“know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.”*

Each month we meet in circles of fellowship, we work together to raise money for missions that support women and children, and we host events that help us better understand world needs even as we simply enjoy each other's company. We are pleased to announce that by the end of 2023, we were able to donate thousands of dollars to five different service organizations as well as offer financial support to the Bright Future Projects.

We welcome women of all ages to fellowship and grow with us. You don't have to be a member of UWF in order to volunteer for projects such as a Rummage Sale, or to attend our interesting programs and special events like Summer Picnic! Come and be a part of making 2024 another great year of United Women in Faith!

SUPER BOWL SUB SALE



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11th

Pre-Orders taken Jan. 28 & Feb. 4

Order your delicious Super Bowl Sub custom made just for you by our **IGNITE Youth!** Subs are \$8 add chips and a homemade cookie for just \$2 more! Proceeds go to fund our 2024 Mission Trip to Indianapolis. Order your sub now and a few extras for your friends!

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER



Tuesday, February 13th

5:30pm-6:30pm

Reservation requested, but not required.

(517) 676-9449

Presented by IGNITE Youth
Free will offering with proceeds benefitting
our Summer 2024 Mission Trip to
Indianapolis, IN

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. *Helen Keller*

Night of a Thousand Blessings

March 17, 2024 5:00 p.m.

The night begins with a good old fashioned Italian dinner with a St. Patrick's Day flair served by our Ignite Youth. Donations for dinner will be used to help fund the annual Youth Mission Trip. Following dinner, you'll have an opportunity to assemble blessing bags, make cookie trays, write greeting notes, assemble birthday kits, and much more as we seek to offer a thousand blessings over the course of one fun evening! Sign up at the Connection Point and see how you can contribute to our preparations in the days to come!

AROUND THE CHURCH

It was the best of times...

Looking back over 2023, we see God at work in us and in the work and ministry of this church. We welcomed new friends and lost beloved ones. We hosted and invited and served and worshiped. We were blessed and we worked to bless others. You'll want to pick up a copy of the Historian's Report at the Connection Point prepared by our Historian, Kim Wolfgang. Kim does a wonderful job of taking pictures of our church in action and of recording the events that make up our story. Be sure to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God's work with us in 2023, and invite God's presence as we move into 2024!

TRUSTEES' CORNER

Peggy Gunns, Trustees Chair

January is a looking back and looking forward month. As we look back at 2023 we're pleased with all the upgrades we made to our church and parsonage. Now it's time to look ahead at what's in store for 2024!



Looking ahead at 2024, in addition to all the usual care and maintenance of our facilities, we will be focusing on three new projects. The greatest of these will be updating the shingle roofs above the sanctuary and the atrium. We also have plans to replace the windows in the children's wing, and if funds are available, we will reseal the parking lot. (Lots more information and updates to come—stay tuned!)

Additionally, the Trustees will be putting the finishing touches on Phase I of our Bright Future plans and looking ahead at Phase II which will include updates to our sound system and new indoor and outdoor signage.

We want to take a moment to thank the members of our Bright Future subcommittee who worked on Phase I. Many thanks to Laurie Reed, Connie Doss, Lynda Plyler and Colleen Ireland for their research and hard work.

At this time, we are soliciting for new members to support our Phase II initiatives. If you have skills or interest in assisting with the sound system or signage updates, please contact the church office, Pastor Suzanne, or any member of the Trustees to express your interest.

Your Trustees are looking forward to another great year taking care of our church home!

BUDGETS & BLESSINGS

Kim Wolfgang, Finance Chair
Judy Campbell, Trustees Treasurer

Happy New Year to you all! I am so proud of all of us for what we have accomplished in 2023. We supported our Youth for their Mission Trip, we hosted our Living Nativity, Breakfast with Santa, provided support for programs like MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers), and through our missional efforts and giving we provided support for families, students, and educators in our community. *And* we paid our Ministry Shares in full which is the way we offer support and service throughout the world through our United Methodist connection. With your generous support, we made it happen!

As we move into 2024, we have presented a budget to Church Council for **\$484,437** with anticipated income of **\$427,899**. We have identified items in the budget that will only be spent if we have funds available as overseen by the Finance Committee. We believe that if we continue in faithful generosity, we will be able to continue to provide the missions and ministries God calls us to offer. Of course, we will continue to provide updated information on our financial health at our regular Town Hall meetings.

Meanwhile, our investment accounts have rebounded with the market. Our investment accounts are gifts that have been designated for specific purposes such as memorial gifts, scholarships, and our new Legacy Endowment Fund which increased by \$3,781 in new donations and interest income this year.

There are many ways you can make a gift to the church that will provide future security for our missions and ministries. See Kim Wolfgang, Judy Campbell, or Pastor Suzanne if you are considering a legacy gift to the church.

Mason First is Now a Meals on Wheels Distribution Center!

Meals on Wheels, which has long operated out of the former Nazarene Church location, was in dire need of a new location to serve as the drop-off and pick-up hub for its meal delivery team. Our Trustees committee agreed that using our building to help feed people was a great use of our space. You may notice coolers and food bags on the Lower Level. Each morning a driver drops off the day's meals, and shortly after, volunteers come and pick up their deliveries and drop off their boxes and bags from the previous day. We're fine-tuning the logistics and aesthetics, but it's great to partner with an organization that provides such an essential service. Welcome Meals on Wheels!





Valuable Volunteers

Our church continues to grow and offer new programs and services as we reach extend hospitality and assistance to our community. We need the assistance of valuable people like you to help make it all happen! Here are just some of the ways you (and maybe a friend) can provide assistance to the staff:

- Copying, folding, stuffing, preparing mailings etc.
- Tidying and restocking the pew pockets in the Sanctuary each week.
- Volunteer to answer phones during our busier times to give Sarah uninterrupted production time.
- Assisting with music production and filing.
- Hospitality for special events—be a greeter, make coffee or cookies, etc.
- Serve as a host when we are called upon to be a warming/cooling station during extreme weather and power outage events.
- Be a MOPs Grandma (help provide childcare during our MOPs programming twice a month).

And, of course, we can always use people on Sunday mornings to offer hospitality—be a greeter, usher, coffee hour host, be a part of the worship tech team, be a liturgist, sing in the choir, be a candle lighter...

There are so many ways to serve and help make our church be the vibrant place of ministry and worship that God calls us to be! Sign up at the Connection Point or talk to Sarah about opportunities that suit your skill set! We'd love to have your help.

Mason First is a Shelter Location

Mason First UMC has agreed to serve as a warming/cooling/shelter location in times of extreme weather events. We'll take one of three shifts (mid-day) with the Presbyterian Church and Mason Community Church picking up the other two shifts to provide a place where people can come and get warm/cool and charge their devices in times of power outages.

We are also a shelter location for those who don't have basements or shelter available in case of a tornado warning. Those events will require immediate response staffing on our part, although there is usually some degree of advance warning.

When extreme weather events are predicted, we will contact our volunteer list to have pairs of volunteers on standby. If you would like to serve as a shelter host (maybe with a friend), sign up at the Connection Point!



*Congratulations
on your Retirement*

Glenn Darling

and thank you for your many years of service and care for the financial wellbeing of our church!

CHURCH NEWS

Our Prayers and Healing Wishes to those with health issues:

- * Ruth Judd
- * Jan Dodge
- * Patricia Vogel
- * Joanne Becker
- * Jennifer Cornell
- * Larry Vandesande
- * Kathy Nelson
- * Stephen Baer

In our thoughts and prayers

Our continued prayers of Strength to those suffering loss:

- * Dorothy Spink
- * Diane McDonald
- * Doris Garrison

Thinking of members/ friends in assisted living, rehab/ nursing facilities, and hospice care:

- Dansville Country Care Assisted Living: Dick Magsig
- Divine Nest, Leslie: *Joyce Darling*
- Grand Haven Living Center, Lansing: *Marilyn Murthum*
- Green Acres, Mason: *Beth Grosshans and Jeanette Strickland*
- Ingham Co. Medical Care Facility, Okemos: *Char Bush and John Dodge*
- Island City Assisted Living, Eaton Rapids: *Don Dickinson*
- The Willows of Okemos: *Lew Tibbits*

When the weather outside is frightful and schools are closed, our office is closed also. We will work with the City of Mason to open the building as an Emergency Operation Center as needed. Those in need may come to keep warm, charge phones, and shower.

Be "In the Know" when it comes to event cancelations:

- ✓ Check our new website: masonfirstumc.org
- ✓ Check Facebook: **Mason First United Methodist Connection**
- ✓ Call the Church phone, listen to the message: **517.676.9449**



Building Use Tips



Let us know ahead of time when you or your group will be in the building. We will reserve the space, make sure you have heating/ cooling, and make sure either the doors are open or someone has a key.



Do you have a small project that needs completing or need a ride to an appointment? Contact Helping

Hands, led by Brian Hankey. You may call Brian at 517.676.2463 or call the church office at 517.676.9449.

Historian's Report

The Historian's Report for 2023 is available at the [Connection Point](#).



Sarah's Tech Tips



Take your phone everywhere! In addition to having it in case of an emergency, you can also take photos of everything you need to remember later: take a picture of the sign up sheets at the Connection Point to remember dates and times of events, take a picture of a caring letter to get the address to send a card, or take a screenshot of a webpage so you don't have to search again later. Let your camera work for you; It's a lot easier than writing it all down!



Thank you notes have been received from:

- Glenn Darling
- The Mason Food Bank
- Mason Community Services
- Soaring Unlimited, Haiti

The FUMC staff would like to send a huge THANK YOU to everyone for the generous Christmas bonuses! We are all so thankful to be working with and for such an amazing church!



Our January Noi\$y Bucket is supporting God's Country Cooperative Parish in the U.P. Harsh winters and isolation leaves many without adequate clothing, food, and medical assistance. GCCP combines resources with other churches in the area to provide ministry and support to those in need.

Our February Noi\$y Bucket is supporting the McCurdy Ministries Community Center. The ministry provides after school care, preschool, mental health counseling, summer camps, youth programs, adult education, and GED programs along with much more support for people in the community.



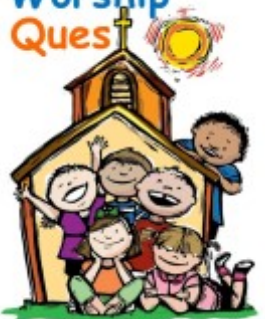


JOIN US FOR EXCITING AND IGNITING YOUTH MINISTRY

- Jan. 21 4pm-6pm Meet in the Youth Room
- Feb. 4 6pm-8pm Snow Tubing at Hawk Island
- Feb. 10 4pm-6pm Assemble subs & pizza party
- Feb. 11 Super Bowl Sub Sale distribution
- Feb. 13 Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Worship
Quest



Christmas Party Fun!

It's an exciting time in Worship Quest! We celebrated Epiphany and learned about the Wisemen and their journey.

Next, we will begin an interesting new series of lessons on the Holy Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit like a smartphone? We'll find out! The children are always eager to learn new things in Worship Quest, and this will be a great topic to explore.

Children preschool–5th Grade are invited to join us downstairs in the One-Room Sunday School classroom during Sunday morning worship.

Nursery care with Miss Sierra is available upon request.

SALT SNOWFLAKE ART



MATERIALS

- Salt
- Elmer's Glue
- Cardstock
- Watercolors with brush
- Cup for water

INSTRUCTIONS

With your glue, draw as many snowflakes as you can on the cardstock. Make them different sizes, shapes, and styles. Sprinkle salt over the wet glue covering the entire snowflakes. Shake off excess salt and let dry.

Once dry, use watercolors to paint over the salt snowflakes by dabbing the paintbrush up and down.



Mason First United Methodist Church

Growing in Faith,
Serving Others,
Sharing the Love of Christ

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www.masonfirst.org

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Return Service Requested

Coming soon - SAVE THE DATE!

Tuesday, February 13
Wednesday, February 14
February 4, 10, 13
Tuesday, February 20

*Every Sunday
*Every Tuesday
*Every Wednesday
*Every Wednesday
*Every 3rd Sunday
*Every 3rd Friday
*Every 4th Tuesday
*Every 1st & 3rd Friday

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner
Ash Wednesday Service
Ignite Youth Group
Simon Peter book study

Wired Word Sunday School
Potluck & Fellowship—Everyone welcome!
Bible Study Class
Mason First Music Ministry—All musicians welcome!
What About the Bible?
Euchre Night—All Euchre players welcome!
UWF Circles Meet—All women welcome!
MOPS

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION: www.masonfirstumc.org