



# *The Window* into the heart of

*Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church*

Volume 6, Number 2, Holiday 2020

## *O Come Let Us Adore Him*

Join Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church for Christmas Season Worship. Our Christmas candlelight traditional services, family and children worship, *The Gathering*, and online experiences will be full of joy - but also compliant with social distancing, mask requirements and safety protocols.

In order to allow enough distance between worshipers at our services, we are adding a Traditional Candlelight Service on Wednesday, December 23, in the Sanctuary. Pastor Tom Strandburg will be officiating and Music Director and Organist Mr. Mitchell Stecker will be leading the music. The liturgy, music, candle lighting, and atmosphere will be the same for this worship service as for our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Another change this season is the requirement that you RSVP. You will be asked to inform the church the service that you wish to attend and how many people will be joining you. For those who choose not to attend, the church will have various Christmas experiences online. More details on the RSVP procedure and the online experiences are forthcoming. As for now, it's time to "prepare the way."

## *Christmas Season Worship*

### **Wednesday, December 23**

*Traditional Candlelight Service  
8 pm in the Sanctuary*

### **Thursday, December 24**

*Service for Children & Families with Tableaux  
3 pm in the Sanctuary*

*"The Gathering Christmas"  
5 pm in Asbury Center*

*Traditional Candlelight Service  
8 pm in the Sanctuary*

### **Sunday, December 27**

*Morning Worship  
10:45 am only in the Sanctuary*

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## Reflections on 2020

What a year this year of 2020 has been! I extend my personal greetings to each one of you, as you read this special year-end edition of The Window. This has truly been a year of shut-downs and cancellations, as we have all tried our very best to deal with the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting economic downturn. I pray that each one of you are well, in the midst of it all. If you are not, please reach out to me by telephone or e-mail. Our church would like to be of service to you in your time of need.

I am very proud to report to you that the life-changing work of our church has continued, despite the challenges that this year has posed. Have you heard about our new ministry, "The WIRE?" It stands for Weekday Individual Remote Education. We have opened our facility to host area children who need a safe and supervised space from which to do their online school work while their parents have returned to work. Under the coordination of Kim Rhoton, our Director of Christian Education, a faithful team of volunteers monitor The Wire in the Welcome Center from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. most weekdays. It has been very gratifying to receive expressions of thanks from the families who have participated in this program. One of our church members invited some neighbor children to join her own at The Wire. She reported that her neighbor was "so relieved" when they heard about The Wire. She had been worried about what her boys would do while she was at work and her husband was working the night shift at a hospital (sleeping during the days). She felt that God was telling her that she didn't have to worry anymore, and that everything was taken care of. We still have some available space in The Wire for new students. If you know of anyone who has a need, please contact the church.

As you are probably aware, we have resumed in-person, indoor worship at 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m., after a unique summer of outdoor worship in the church parking lot. The outdoor worship was a great experience, but it has been a blessing to return to the friendly confines of our church building. In particular, we have enjoyed the opportunity to hear our new Director of Music, Mr. Mitchell Stecker, at the organ for the very first time. After worship a few weeks ago, one of our longtime members told me that "we have been very fortunate to hear many fine organists in this church." She was glad to affirm that this trend now continues with Mr. Stecker. He has begun working with the choir, under COVID-19 restrictions. If you have listened to the Sunday audio podcasts, you have heard the choir through that online medium. I would encourage you to join us in worship however you are able – in person or online. You will read elsewhere in this newsletter about our plans for observing a safe, physically-distant celebration at Christmas. We'll be keeping some of our favorite old traditions in some new and exciting ways. Please join us!

God's blessings continue to flow here at MLUMC, even during these unprecedented times. Financially, the church's status took a more difficult turn at the end of the third quarter. After holding our own through the first half of 2020, we stumbled a bit in July with our annual property taxes due, followed by below-average stewardship receipts in August and September. As I write this article, we are still struggling to regain our financial footing. Whatever you could do to keep your pledge up-to-date, or to make a special gift, would be most appreciated.

We continue to be grateful that our church has not only "survived" but "thrived" during these days of COVID-19. If you have not yet done so, check out the report by that same title on our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). You will hear all about what our church has been able to accomplish during these challenging times. Our volunteers have really stepped up during these days of quarantine and complications! None of our social justice ministries failed to operate this year. We have continued to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, and provide for the poor. As we now approach Thanksgiving, I am thankful for each and every one of you! May the Lord continue to bless both you and your families!

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
*Pastor Tom*  
Thomas Q. Strandburg, Pastor

*The Window* is published quarterly  
by Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church  
3319 W. Liberty Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
412-531-7131 [www.mlumc.org](http://www.mlumc.org)

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# The View from *The Gathering*

By Rev. Scott Miller

The Gathering, the new modern worship service at Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church, is fast closing in on its one-year anniversary! Even though things have changed markedly everywhere due to the virus, we are finally back “home” inside Asbury Center every Sunday morning at 8:30.

As I look back and reflect, it’s hard to believe this service has only been around for a year. We have a solid core of regular attenders, wonderful and varied music, engaging sermons, a laid back and relaxed atmosphere, and enough “socially distanced” space for everyone who wants to attend. So I invite you to come on down, give it a try and **bring a friend!**

We continue to be blessed with great music, provided by our team lead BJ Collins, drummer Keith Moorehouse,



vocalist Michelle Duralia, our own Eric Palmer on the bass guitar, and frequent guests Bob Banerjee on violin and Joe Boward on saxophone.

This team truly provides a wonderful music ministry for The Gathering. I’m also indebted to my wonderful wife Natalie, who is so consistent in her help with the A/V system and presentation.

Though safety protocols have put a damper on things The Gathering folks are used to – coffee and snacks, passing the offering plate, and so on – in December we will resume one unique feature: weekly Communion. Many congregations have been unable to receive our Lord’s Supper since this past March, if it has even been offered at all. Pastor Tom and I were very blessed to be able to provide Communion several times during our summer parking lot services, and I’m happy to report The Gathering will be resuming Communion on the first Sunday in December (12/6/20). What a wonderful early Christmas present!

The Gathering will be having its Christmas Eve service this year at **5pm on Thursday December 24th**, in Asbury Center as usual. So please get ready for some great upbeat Christmas music and a positive Christmas message!

It’s been my humble privilege to serve as pastor for The Gathering service this past year, and I look forward to another year of serving God and all of you.

His and yours,  
Rev. Scott Miller



## A Service of Compline

By Mitchell Stecker, Director of Music

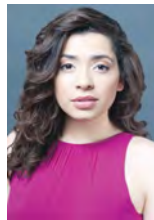
Dear friends of Mt. Lebanon UMC,

You are invited to a new opportunity for worship through music here at MLUMC, our monthly compline service. Although it is new to us, it’s actually something quite old; the service of compline is a component of the liturgy of the hours, the traditional pattern of daily prayer practiced by monastics and other Christians of many stripes for more than a thousand years. Compline comes to English from the Latin word *completre*, meaning “to complete,” referencing the very last hour of prayer of the day, said right before retiring for the evening. It “completes” the activities of the day.

The service is an *a cappella* service, incorporating hymns, anthems and chanted psalms and excerpts from scripture. The remaining services of compline for 2020 take place on Saturday, Nov. 21st and Saturday, Dec. 12th, both beginning at 7 PM in the Sanctuary. I invite you to attend and experience the service for yourself. If you are unable to join us in person, the services will be recorded and shared through the MLUMC website.

Yours in Christ,  
Mitchell Stecker  
Director of Music

## MLUMC Soloist Timothy Williams



Have you heard the beautiful singing of Timothy Williams at our worship services? The church has retained the services of Timothy, a mezzo-soprano and up-and-coming professional artist specializing in classical repertoire. She has a degree in Vocal Performance from West Liberty University and a Masters in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from Penn State. She attributes her initial interest in singing to watching her grandmothers and mother use their musical talents in the church.

Timothy performs regularly with many orchestral, vocal, and chamber ensembles throughout the east coast and the Pittsburgh area. She has a passion for education and enjoys sharing the gift of voice with others through her private voice studio, offering masterclasses and teaching at the university level. Let’s welcome Timothy to our church as we listen to her lovely voice.



# The WIRE

## Weekday Individual Remote Education

With so many local schools providing online instruction this fall, what can working parents do with their children who cannot be left at home alone? MLUMC is attempting to meet this need with The WIRE, which stands for Weekday Individual Remote Education. Registered students bring their laptops and school supplies to the Welcome Center so they can attend virtual classes and complete assignments. Church volunteers help to make sure children are on task and safe throughout the day. This new ministry has flourished with so many people working together, but we can always use more help! Consider assisting in one of the following ways:



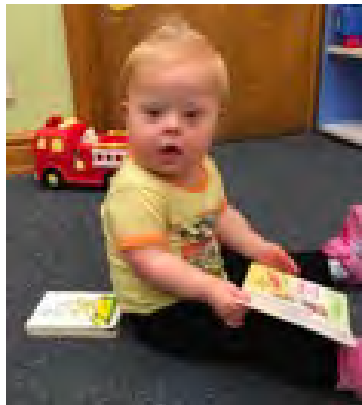
- Volunteer as an adult monitor for a few hours a week.
- Tell people in your community that we are offering this service to families
- Make a financial contribution to help offset costs to the church
- Pray for the families and volunteers

For more information about The WIRE, please contact Kim Rhoton [krhoton@mlumc.org](mailto:krhoton@mlumc.org)

## Weekday Ministries Childcare Center *by Mettelise Ziegler, WDM Director*

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

JOHN 10:27-29



Our little lambs have adapted well to their Coronavirus childcare experience. We were not able to take a school bus to a farm for pumpkins. There will be no parents at holiday parties. However, the most important thing is still happening. Our children are learning in an environment based on faith, hope and love.

## Tableaux Tradition with a 2020 Twist

Our annual Tableaux will be held during the children and family service on Christmas Eve this year (December 24 at 3 p.m.) We will have some changes to our normal routine in order to ensure the health and safety of all involved. We will be limiting the number of participants, and music will be provided by soloists instead of the full choir.

The Tableaux will be in lieu of the Children's Choir participation in this service, so anyone is welcome to take part - kids and adults alike. Older teens and adults will also be needed to help with costuming and "shepherding" the younger cast members. A rehearsal will be held at a yet to be determined time. If you would like to sign up to be in the cast or help behind the scenes, contact Kim Rhoton, [krhoton@mlumc.org](mailto:krhoton@mlumc.org)





# Youth Ministries at Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church



The youth at MLUMC have spent the fall months getting to know God and getting to know each other. Through lessons, games, and activities the youth have taken time to build relationships within the youth group. The youth have gotten to know one another's backgrounds, interests, gifts, and aspirations. The many differences and varied backgrounds discovered in the group will be celebrated and used as a starting point for building relationships outside of the group moving forward.

The youth began meeting again at the church in September, enjoying activities like kickball, dodgeball, spoons, paint night, acrostic name drawings, a "Follow Me" scavenger hunt, and our annual pumpkin carving contest. These activities were for the most part outdoors. Through the winter months the youth will continue to gather, both in-person and virtually and continue building our relationships. We will reach out to members of the church and the community to learn more about them, understand them better, and learn to love our neighbors as Jesus has called us to do. We will be seeking prayer partners during the winter months, participating in service projects, and continuing to have as much fun as we can along the way.



## Advent Candle Lighting

Volunteers are needed to help with lighting Advent candles each Sunday during Advent and Christmas Eve services. No special skills required!



Candle lighters can be families (including children), couples, or friends. Dates for Advent Sundays are Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13 and Dec. 20. Christmas Eve services will be held Dec. 23 and 24. If you are interested, please contact Kim Rhoton with a date and service preference.

## Homemade Christmas Cookies for a Good Cause

This year, the United Methodist Women will be selling boxes of delicious homemade Christmas cookies lovingly prepared and safely packaged. Two sizes will be available for order:

- A large box for \$20
- A small box for \$10

Each box will contain an assortment of the tasty, cookies you know and love from our annual Christmas Cookie & Gift Bazaar.

To reserve your boxes, you must pre-order by Nov. 30. Call the church office (412.531.7131) with your name, phone number, email, and the number and size of the boxes you want to purchase. You can pick up the boxes at church on:

- Saturday, Dec. 12 from 10 a.m. to noon
- Sunday, Dec. 13 before and after church services

All proceeds from the sale will benefit relief organizations that support women, children and youth. Thank YOU for your support during this challenging year of fundraising! *Please note: Cookies may contain nuts, eggs, flour and other allergens.*



## Calling All Cookie Bakers

Cookie bakers are needed for this year's modified UMW Christmas Cookie Sale. Here's how to deliciously donate:

- Bake a batch or 2 of your favorite Christmas cookies. It's okay to bake now and store the cookies in a sealed plastic bag or container in the freezer.
- Leave the cookies in the church kitchen on Thurs. Dec. 10 from 9 am to 8 pm or on Fri. Dec. 11 by noon.

For more information, contact Bonnie Lawson at 412.759.3546 or [bonnielawson58@comcast.net](mailto:bonnielawson58@comcast.net).

# A Tough Year Financially, But We Are Getting Through It Together!

*by Rob Spicher, Finance Committee Chair*

What a year it has been, not only for our Church but also for our nation. As I type this article in mid-October, we are witnessing a spike in the COVID 19 pandemic while struggling with its on-going fall-out on so many aspects of our lives. The cries for a society with equality and justice for all have never been louder, but the path to achieving such remains strewn with obstacles. God's presence and guidance is seemingly needed now more than ever.

As you are well aware, the events of 2020 have disrupted our normal routines. For a number of months, our Church was not open for in-person worship. Many activities and events were either postponed or cancelled. Although the ministries of our Church have continued, the possibility of members and friends becoming "disconnected" from not only one another but also from our broader mission of "making disciples of Jesus Christ" has greatly increased. My concern, as Finance Committee Chair, was that any "disconnecting" would impact regular financial support.

To ensure that adequate cash reserves were available to pay staff, maintain facilities, and conduct ministries if weekly giving significantly declined, a Special Charge Conference meeting was held in early April. Although consideration was given to applying for a loan through the Paycheck Protection Program, it was determined that a better avenue for our Church was to leave those funds for organizations more in need and to instead secure a loan secured by a portion of our unrestricted endowment accounts. Fortunately, the proceeds from said loan have to date not been needed, as the prepayment of pledges by a number of members as well as regular contributions from others have combined to keep cash flow steady during the normally slow summer months. Although giving has fallen off in recent weeks, it is my hope that the 4th quarter will see both remaining pledges paid in full as well as an uptick in non-pledged gifts.

Our Church's annual generosity (stewardship) campaign will take place through the month of November. With fewer people at worship due to the pandemic and economic challenges, the success of our campaign will be hard to predict. However, it is my fervent hope that those of you who have financially supported our Church's staff, facilities, and ministries in the past will continue to do so, and any of you who have heretofore not been a financial contributor to our efforts will become one.

On behalf of the Finance Committee, I would like to close by thanking you for your faithful financial support of our Church during 2020. I would also like to express my hope that such will continue during 2021.



## The MICAH challenge

God has told you, O mortal,  
what is good; and what does the  
Lord require of you but to do  
justice, and to love kindness, and  
to walk humbly with your God?

*Micah 6:8*

### 2021 Generosity Campaign

The Micah Challenge, to do what the Lord requires, speaks to us today. One of the keys to walking humbly with our God is to be thankful for all of God's gifts, and generous in our own giving. In our gratefulness, we need to consider what we might give in support of our church's ministry in the coming year.

A 2021 Estimate of Giving Card was distributed during worship and was mailed to church members and friends. Additional cards and brochures are available on the narthex literature tables and can be downloaded from our website ([www.mlumc.org](http://www.mlumc.org)). We invite you to return the card by mail or in-person. If you have chosen to suspend attendance at worship because of the virus, you may want to make your pledge of support online. Go to our church website, select "Giving" and then "Pledge."

Whether you pledge in-person, online, or through the mail, know that God will be honored, and many will be blessed by your response.

*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

*Matthew 6:24*





# The Micah Challenge Opportunities: Doing What the Lord Requires of Us in our UMC District and Church

## The Pittsburgh District of the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Pittsburgh District, of which MLUMC is a member, presents a vision based upon Micah 6:8:

*The Pittsburgh District is a place where all God's people are welcome. Our shared ministry is to build bridges of beloved community, embrace full inclusion and extend radical hospitality grounded in justice. This mission is to follow the way of Jesus – welcoming all, healing brokenness and transforming lives. Our belief is that Jesus invites us to live, to lament, to laugh and to love together in a spirit of reconciliation and transformation. We are Wesleyan to the core in our movement for justice.*

Goals of the Pittsburgh District include:

- Supporting District Ant-Racism Team in equipping clergy and laity to combat racism
- Resource and nurture congregations to welcome and affirm LGBTQIA+ people
- Support churches and agencies in dismantling systemic poverty
- Creating a team to develop an urban/metro strategy to equip all for ministry in Allegheny County.

## Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church

Here are some opportunities at MLUMC where you can *do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God*:

### **Food Insecurity/poverty**

**Food Pantry** - Shop, bag and deliver food and family needs on variable days of the week.

**Food Lift** - Pick-up and delivery of food to kitchens and food pantries across Pittsburgh. Opportunities daily.

**North Side Lunch at Church Union** - Prepare and serve hot meal the first Thursday of the month.

**East End Cooperative Ministry** - Obtain, prepare and serve dinner one Sunday evening every other month.

**Community Events & Outreach Committee** - Umbrella committee for the food insecurity missions above plus preparing and serving free fish fry, barbecue and Thanksgiving dinners as well as other anti-poverty initiatives throughout the year.

### **Incarceration**

**Magazine collection and delivery to Allegheny Co. Jail Chaplain's Office** - Delivery is possible Mondays 9 am - 1 pm

**Foundation of Hope for Allegheny Co. Jail inmates** - Seasonal volunteering such as caroling or greater involvement.

### **Discrimination**

**MLUMC's Do No Harm Committee is a Reconciling Ministries Network member and seeks full inclusion for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the church** - Meetings for education, witness and resources are held Sunday evenings.

**Do No Harm Committee meets and seeks paths to racial equity, social justice and inclusion** - Curriculum for Sunday school classes and other groups is being developed. Book discussions of relevant titles are announced in the bulletin.

## **Community Thanksgiving Meal - Community Events & Outreach Committee**

For almost 40 years, those in the South Hills needing a hearty meal on Thanksgiving Day have been treated by Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church. Today the tradition is jointly run by Bethany and MLUMC. In 2019 approximately 1,000 meals were served by the two churches: 450 eat in at Bethany and 550 delivered from MLUMC.

This year the pandemic has changed the way that the meal will be provided, implementing social distancing and safety. MLUMC is asking for your help in the following ways: 1) Provide one or more roasted turkeys, preferably carved, early Thanksgiving week; 2) Help on Thanksgiving Day with meal preparation and packaging in Asbury Center; 3) Help on Thanksgiving Day with meal deliveries to our neighboring communities; and 4) make a donation to MLUMC to help defray the cost of the meal. For more information or to help with the Thanksgiving Meal contact Community Events and Outreach Committee Chair Rob Spicher: 412-720-4589, [robert.spicher@pnc.com](mailto:robert.spicher@pnc.com) or [robspicher1955@outlook.com](mailto:robspicher1955@outlook.com).



*Last Year's Turkey Dinner preps*

# Community Events & Outreach Committee - Finding Ways to Help Others

On February 28, the Community Events & Outreach Committee served over 450 meals at a Lenten Fish Fry. This event was planned to be the first of many in 2020 that would provide hospitality and fellowship to our friends and neighbors. Unfortunately, COVID 19 necessitated cancellation of many of these events, but it did not stop the Committee from helping others.

The food-related missions under the Committee's umbrella have continued with changes. The Food Pantry has streamlined its processes to protect volunteers and clients. The Food Lift has expanded to assist Food Pantry clients. The programs of The North Side Lunches and East End Cooperative Ministries Dinners have made changes to implement social distancing while feeding hungry people.

Family Promise, the housing/hospitality mission under the Committee's umbrella, was forced by the pandemic to retool its model. Our church was able to provide some financial assistance during this retooling process.

The Committee worked on 2 new initiatives this fall. The group donated 75 backpacks with school supplies to children of Food Pantry clients and St. Paul's AME church in the city's Beltzhoover neighborhood. The Committee also is supporting an initiative started by church member Tom Wagner to provide kits containing face masks and protective items to folks at risk in the Pittsburgh area. Over 200 kits have been completed and delivered, with many more in the pipeline.



*Backpacks with school supplies for donation*

**Reaching Out** Most Community Events and Outreach Committee-sponsored events rely on free will donations to cover costs. However, this year the pandemic has led to projects without contributions made the day of an event. Backpack donations to children in need and mask/sanitary supplies given to individuals at risk are projects without free will donations. The Committee anticipates similar projects in 2021, and invites interested church members and friends to assist in the financial support of these efforts. As a financial sponsor, you will have input into the projects and an opportunity to assist. And, most importantly, your support will help ensure that the project helps those in need.

**For more information, to help with projects, or to become a financial sponsor of outreach projects, contact Community Events and Outreach Committee Chair Rob Spicher: 412-720-4589, [robert.spicher@pnc.com](mailto:robert.spicher@pnc.com) or [robspicher1955@outlook.com](mailto:robspicher1955@outlook.com).**



## The Volunteers of the Food Lift - 365 Days/Year Feeding Hungry People

The pandemic has not slowed down the men and women of the Food Lift. They show up at dawn at The Market District, pack their vans, trucks, and hatchbacks and head for shelters, ministries, rehab centers and individual homes to feed hungry people. They double park in downtown Pittsburgh to pick-up the bread and pastries at La Gourmandine. They deliver to churches supplying nutrition to those who have lost jobs to the virus. They stop at Breadworks and Panera's, drop off at the Salvation Army, Jubilee Kitchen, and MLUMC's food pantry. They wear masks and social distance. They don't stop - 365 days/year.

**For more information or to volunteer, contact Don Langston 412-894-5559**





*Pre-pandemic North Side Lunch Crew*

## North Side Lunch

*by Francie Robb*

For over 30 years MLUMC members have fed hungry people at Daily Bread Ministry the first Thursday of the month. It will take more than a pandemic to disrupt this ministry. It took some creativity, a few new approaches and plenty of church support, but we have been able to provide healthy meals while also staying safe.

As the virus marched into our lives, the April lunch provided new challenges. In April, all the food was prepared in kitchens of church members, who delivered it to the church. From Asbury Center, our team packed individual lunches, while staying properly distant. We also received support from the MLUMC Outreach Committee, who provided us with unused Fish Fry Styrofoam containers and condiment packets. On Thursday, one of our crew delivered the lunches. On a sunny spring day she and Pastor Bob set up a table in the parking lot of Daily Bread and served bag lunches to over 80 people, while also offering toilet paper to anyone who needed some.

For the May, June and July lunch, we cooked in the MLUMC kitchen, maintaining social distance. We continued to use containers to pre-serve the peaches, coleslaw and corn but now we could serve a hot entree. The Daily Bread basement room was again open on a limited basis - only five people allowed in at a time, and asked to wear masks while inside.



*The Daily Bread basement eating area*

Lunches were also packed in bags and taken out. Taking advantage of other COVID cancellations, we were happy to include Rev. Tom Strandburg to the serving end of the program, experiencing for himself this long running ministry.

In August, with some indoor restrictions lifted, Pastor Bob set up 12 chairs in the basement and a few people were allowed to eat inside. Meanwhile, our prep continued in the MLUMC kitchen, with Scott and Berni Bowes, Kathy Tremblay, Lavis Ward, Tom Wagner, Louanne Baily and Francie Robb; while Jim Lutz and Clark and Mary Remington continued to provide much appreciated help from their home kitchens.

Identifying a need for preventative health care, Tom Wagner assembled 80 anti-virus kits to deliver to Pastor Bob in September. Pastor Bob, excited to get them, distributed them to families he knew were particularly vulnerable. With the enthusiastic response from Daily Bread, MLUMC will continue in the creation of anti-virus kits to be distributed as needed, all under the sponsorship of the Outreach Committee, thank you!

By October, it begins to feel like our routine is established. Some cooking is done in homes, the final prep is done in the MLUMC kitchen. On Thursday, 3 of us deliver the food to the Northside, and serve carry-out lunch bags to anyone who wants a meal—constantly requesting they wear a mask to the counter. After putting out a plea for cold weather clothing, Lavis Ward delivered 100 knit hats and scarves, all made by Anna Fairgrieve (Carol's granddaughter). These supplies were met with great enthusiasm and



Working around the COVID 19 virus has taken some juggling and new approaches, but we have been able to continue the program, feeding 70-100 meals each month. We are seeing many familiar faces at lunch, along with some new ones, but everyone is pleased to be fed and remembered. People have been so gracious and appreciative to us for providing them with food during a difficult time. We have all witnessed acts of kindness, one man who picks up 8 meals each month and delivers them to families who live near him. Another man picks up 2 meals and takes them to friends waiting in the parking lot, unable to traverse the steep stairs to the basement.

Special thank you to everyone who has helped this program continue, with the support of MLUMC, we have been able to continue this decades long food program, even during a pandemic.

# MLUMC Congregational Focus for the 2020-2021 Year



To love God with all our heart,  
with all our soul, and all our mind;  
and to love our neighbor as our self.

## Congregational Focus

We propose to support this essential Christian tenet by asking MLUMC and its members/friends to focus on ending discrimination, combatting racism, and promoting social justice during the 2020-2021 church year. We are requesting approval from Church Council for this focus.

The education and action items below will expand MLUMC's understanding and capacity to serve the needy or hurt, due to sexism, race or economic status. Galatians 3:28 (NIV) states "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Our emphasis will be to acknowledge discrimination, fight racism and foster social justice throughout our world.

### ACTION

- Send a survey to MLUMC members to gauge their feelings and solicit suggestions for church action.
- Host an Implicit Bias Workshop
- WPAUMC Anti-Racism Team, "Ways to Respond to Racism"

### EDUCATION

- Participate in Book Studies: White Rage, ongoing, (see below); So You Want to Talk about Race or Witnessing Whiteness as recommended by WPAUMC possibly for the winter; White Fragility study completed.
- Watch Reconciling Ministries Network movies as they are available, including "The Death & Life of Marsha P. Johnson."
- Create a speaker series under the umbrella of 'Who is our Neighbor' and what are their experiences.
- Present optical message or curated visual presentation engaging viewers in lives of Black or people of color
- Offer focused Sunday School programs on what it means to "Love our Neighbor"

### New Church Book Discussion Group Forming

Please join us on alternate Wednesday evenings, starting November 18 at 7 PM, for a Zoom discussion of the *New York Times* bestseller, White Rage by Carol Anderson. This slim volume promises to be a stimulating read. Please contact Clark Remington [corkrem@verizon.net](mailto:corkrem@verizon.net) to get your Zoom invitation.

## Justice + Righteousness = Social Justice

*"The Lord loves social justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love."* PSALM 33:5 (translation by C. Wright)  
by Pastor Tom Strandburg

At its meeting in September, our Church Council voted to establish "social justice" as its theme for this program year. As a result, you will hear this theme addressed in worship, bible studies, and programmatic events throughout the year. The words "justice" and "righteousness" are two prominent biblical concepts. The most basic meaning of the word "justice" is to treat people equitably, respecting the rights of all persons. The word "righteousness" refers to the quality of relationships – our relationship with God and with one another. Just remember those first five letters – RIGHT. We experience righteousness when our relationships with God and with other people are "right." The Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright summed it up well when he wrote: "**Justice** is what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with **righteousness**." He further offers that when these two words are used together in the same sentence in the Hebrew language, as they are over three dozen times, the English expression that best conveys the meaning is **social justice**.

From the perspective of the Bible, then, the work of social justice is the work of doing whatever is necessary to restore every relationship to the status which God intends. We should all certainly be supportive of that kind of work! In the United Methodist Church, we often hear about the "five areas of focus" for our Western Pennsylvania Conference. They are as follows – 1) Developing principled Christian leaders, 2) Creating new and renewed congregations, 3) Engaging in ministry with the poor, 4) Promoting abundant health, and 5) Dismantling racism. In their own way, each of these areas of focus contributes to the ministry of social justice in the world today. You will notice that our own church will work in each of these focus areas throughout the upcoming year. This month, we would like your help with focus area #5 – dismantling racism. On the next page you will find a survey on the subject of "privilege." We would like you to take the survey, and prayerfully ponder each question, as part of our emphasis upon social justice. It is not necessary to return the completed document. Any questions concerning the survey may be directed to its editor, Clark Remington, at [corkrem@verizon.net](mailto:corkrem@verizon.net).



## Ending discrimination, combatting racism, and promoting social justice



If we as a congregation are to work at dismantling racism, as our W PA Conference and Congregational Focus advise, we should be aware of where we ourselves fit into the picture. We also must understand the vocabulary of racism and antiracism. The following articles may help:

### White Privilege

White people are generally unaware that they enjoy a "white privilege" that other people do not. Galatians 3:28 states, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all in one Christ Jesus."* Is this true in our country? Take the survey below to determine if you are privileged more than others.

- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing where my neighbors will be pleasant and welcoming.
- When I am taught about the history of our nation I am shown that people of my color were involved.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against me.
- I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily protection.
- If a traffic cop pulls me over I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- I can easily buy postcards, picture books, greeting cards, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
- If I am denied credit I can be sure it's not because of my race.
- I can choose public accommodation without fearing people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated.
- I can arrange my activities so I will never have to experience of rejection owing to my race.
- I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

Do you enjoy privileges others do not? How can we share our privilege? Opportunities are coming your way soon.

This survey is taken from the essay, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," by Peggy McIntosh, originally published in 1988.

### Racism and Antiracism

To dismantle racism, we must know it when we see it. The book How to be an Antiracist by Ibram Kendi gives us a roadmap for recognizing racism, understanding our blind spots and increasing our ability to advocate for social justice. Give these definitions a try and see what you think. (from How to be an Antiracist (pages 18-24))

- Racial Inequity - when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing
- Racial Equity - when two or more racial groups are standing on a relatively equal footing
- Racist Policy - any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups
- Antiracist policy - any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups
- Policy - written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people
- We all have the power to discriminate. Only an exclusive few have the power to make policy. Focusing on 'racial discrimination' takes our eyes off the central agents of racism: racist policy and racist policymakers, or what I call racist power.
- Racist idea - any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way
- Antiracist idea - any idea that suggest the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences - that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group
- Antiracist ideas - argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequities
- Racism - a powerful collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity and are substantiated by racist ideas
- Antiracism - a powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to racial equity and are substantiated by antiracist ideas
- A racist - someone who is supporting a racist policy by their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea
- An antiracist - someone who is supporting an antiracist policy by their action or expressing an antiracist idea
- Antiracist - One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity
- "Racist" and "antiracist" are like peelable nametags that are placed and replaced based on what someone is doing or not doing, supporting or expressing in each moment.

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## Poinsettia and the Family Fund Christmas Memorials

Make a donation to the Family Fund or purchase a poinsettia in honor or memory of friends or loved ones. The Family Fund supports families in our church in their time of need. The red poinsettias cost \$8.50 and will be on display Sun. Dec. 20, and during the services on Dec. 23 and Dec. 24. You may pick up your plant after the 8 pm Christmas Eve service or after Christmas Day. This year because of the COVID 19 pandemic, we are prohibited from delivering the flowers to facilities and will not be delivering to shut-ins. **The deadline for ordering flowers is Sun., November 29.**

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### Christmas Memorials 2020    Order Deadline Sunday, Nov. 29

Make check payable to MLUMC. Mark the memo line *Poinsettia* or *Family Fund*.

Donation to MLUMC Family Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Given in (circle) "memory" or "honor" of :

\_\_\_\_\_

Purchase poinsettias (number) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$8.50 each = \_\_\_\_\_ Given in (circle) "memory" or "honor" of :

\_\_\_\_\_

Donor Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_