



EMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WE WELCOME! WE WORSHIP! WE WITNESS!

JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Pastor Ben shared this for his online devotional on December 30th.

I was reminded recently of an old Christmas Special that we watched when I was a kid. It was a Claymation special with a lot of Christmas Carols and such. I remember one in particular because of how it decided to have some fun with a traditional carol.

Here we come a-waffling among the leaves so green; Here we come a-waffling So fair to be seen.

Love and joy come to you, And to you your waffle too; And God bless you and send you A Happy New Year And God send you a Happy New Year

Beyond the fun with waffles, the tune has been ringing in my ear these past few days, especially that last line. *And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year.* There is a lot in those words. What we are asking of God. But also what I think God asks of us.

We do have high hopes for the new year. And prayers. And we ask for God's blessings. We know that God only wants the very best for us.

But as we always do, we enter the new year with those "resolutions." Not only

the expectations we have for the good that will come our way, but what are those ways we can change and grow in the coming year. We have those common ones we think about for our person lives, whether it be exercising or getting more organized. But what about a "New Years resolution" when it comes to our faith? I believe our faith calls us to consider how I am intentionally becoming more like Jesus as the new year begins. The one that came not to be served, but to serve. The one that came not to be blessed, but to bless others.

Our United Methodist Tradition has a beautiful prayer for occasions like this called the "Wesley Covenant Prayer."

The Wesleyan Covenant Prayer was adapted by John Wesley, the co-founder of Methodism (along with his brother, Charles) for the renewal of the believer's covenant with God. Wesley says that the prayer was first used in a covenant renewal service held on Monday, August 11, 1755. But I always appreciate it around this time, as we are about to begin a new year. With all of the new years resolutions we make. The covenant prayer is kind of like our annual "New Year's resolution" to become more like Jesus in all things we do. Offering our lives to God to love and serve in the same ways that Jesus loved and served. We are not just asking

God to bless our lives, but are intentionally leaning in towards the purposes of God's kingdom, of love, justice and mercy.

And so, I would like to invite you to join me in the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer as we enter 2024 together:

"I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."

Amen. And may God bless you, send you a Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Pastor Ben

OUR SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 8:45 Sunday School
- 10:00 Worship

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ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY 14TH

Our journey through Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 14th. Emmanuel will host our neighbors from St. James for Ash Wednesday worship at 7 p.m. following our Wednesday Night Meal.



CONVOCAION OF LAITY FEBRUARY 9TH & 10TH



Connect with our Conference Leadership during this event to:

- Learn of connectional ministries within The United Methodist Church.
- Be encouraged to broaden your God given gifts and talents within the work of the church.
- Devotion and Bible study scripture during this inspiration filled event.

Date & Time:

February 9, 2024, 6:30pm, Meet and greet with a build your own taco bar dinner.

February 10, 2024, 8:30am Registration, Lunch at noon will be build your own sub sandwich, Program 9:30pm - 4:00pm.

Friday dinner and Saturday lunch will be provided.

Location:

West Bend: Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church
323 S 5th Avenue
West Bend, WI 53095

Registration fee \$10.00 per person. Please register for the meals you will be eating with us. Everyone must register by the deadline. Registration deadline is January 26, 2024, at Noon.

Register online at <https://na.eventscloud.com/website/65439/>

MLK “DREAM WORSHIP” AT SHERMAN UMC JANUARY 14TH

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is one of the most talked about, quoted, and misunderstood figures in history. Surely, we talk about his marches and speeches. We discuss his commitment to equality. We admire his ability to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized of the world.

But, in all of our discussions and meditations about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we often leave out that he was a messenger of

God who was called to a divine and holy assignment. We are going to illuminate Dr. King’s life, work and the nexus between both and his faith.

Sherman UMC in Madison welcomes all to its MLK “Dream Worship Experience” on January 14th. Reverend Dr. Marcus Allen will be delivering the message on that morning. We will also have a Racial Justice and the Bible discussion before worship at 8:30am.



STEWARDSHIP MOMENT FROM WISCONSIN UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION

“Active Discipleship

January 2024

A University chaplain had an interesting conversation with a student that came to see him one day. He writes:

“I was wondering what I ought to do about the exam,” she said, “then I looked at this bracelet” (here she gestured to the “What Would Jesus Do?” bracelet on her wrist), “and I said to myself, ‘I am going to just say a little prayer, relax, and look after myself.’”

And I thought to myself, “I can think of at least a couple of other things Jesus might tell you to do — like get over to the library and get busy studying for this exam.”

Devoid of specific content, insubstantial, vague “spirituality” may be our contemporary Christian undoing. We have rendered Jesus into someone so vague, amorphous, and flimsy that he makes little claim upon us. Jesus has become a fashion accessory, something tied to our wrist, a comfort, never a challenge. What would Jesus do? Whatever we do, it appears.

This short story reminds me of what a challenge Christian Discipleship. It is easy for us to become a member of a church, attend several times a year, give a little money, and to sit back and relax because we all know that God’s grace is free. And yet, we forget that while God’s love is given to us freely, if we allow it to grab ahold of us, it changes our lives. Our priorities are no longer our own, but God’s. We pray that “God’s will be done,” not only in a general sense, but particularly in and through our own lives. This means becoming an active part of our community of faith. Giving our energy to worship, instead of being a passive observer. Actively loving and serving our neighbor, instead of just praying for them and hoping for a miracle. Spending time with God in prayer and study. Letting generosity be the top priority in our finances, not just giving what’s left over after we’ve gotten ours.

Christian Discipleship is a difficult enterprise. Thank God we have grace to support us and strengthen us. And thank God we have a community of faith to help us along and to hold us accountable.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation





Pastor Ben shared a story with some friends at the 8 pm service on Christmas Eve.



The Emmanuel Choir made a joyful noise on Christmas Eve!
Ryan Korb directed and played percussion.



Thank you to all who purchased gifts for our "Adopt-a-Family" program! The Youth wrapped them on December 13th and they were delivered on December 15th to our community partner.

Two Conferences, One Bishop Opens New Opportunities

Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences are anticipating the possibility they will share a bishop beginning in the Fall of 2024. Wisconsin's Shared Ministry Task Force membership was approved at the 2023 Annual Conference session and have begun discussions about what this would mean for United Methodists in our state.

Sharing a bishop will not be a merger of our conferences. It will be similar to a two-point charge where separate congregations are served by the same pastor.

The conferences would continue as distinct entities. One bishop would lead the two conferences, appointing clergy, presiding at annual conference sessions, and providing administrative oversight for each separate conference.

Both the Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences, separately and together, are thinking ahead about what sharing a bishop might require. Bishop, the Cabinet and Conference leadership will pursue more of innovative partnership and collaborations in future years.

"This is an opportunity for us to think creatively about how both conferences can positively benefit from sharing our strengths across conference lines," stated Rev. Steve Zekoff, chair of Wisconsin's Shared Ministry Task Force. "We have a common history in the early days of our annual conferences, as well as with the historical language-based annual conferences that were organized for ministry in this part of the Upper Midwest. Having our two distinct annual conferences cooperate more closely will be like family members deciding it is time to be more frequently in contact."

Cooperating as a two-annual conference episcopal area could enhance partnership opportunities. For example, churches in both conferences that minister with language minorities could collaborate and achieve more together. Each conference has its strengths, and if yoked in an episcopal area, may be able to assist each other.

Early conversations have occurred involving district superintendents and other staff from both annual conferences. The task forces from both Northern Illinois and Wisconsin will be gathering together for planning discussions this year.

A few statistical similarities and differences between the conferences:

- Both have significant rural expanses as well as urban centers
- Geographic area: Northern Illinois Conference is about 25 percent the size of Wisconsin
- Number of churches: Northern Illinois 321; Wisconsin, 400
- Disaffiliations: Northern Illinois 8; Wisconsin, 43
- Districts: Northern Illinois, 5; Wisconsin is reducing from 5 to 4

At the 2022 North Central Jurisdictional conference, delegates from Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences read a shared statement affirming that the two conferences were willingly considering sharing a bishop, including holding joint conversations.

Over the past several years, jurisdictions have been asked to reduce bishop positions. Some other conferences around the United Methodist connection relate in this way. As United Methodist membership in the U.S. has declined since the 1968 uniting of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist denominations each of the five U.S. jurisdictions (multi-state regional bodies) has seen the number of bishops they could elect go down. The number that may be elected is established by a specified membership formula in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Serving on Wisconsin's task force are Rev. Steve Zekoff, Rev. Jenny Arneson, Gail Burgess, Lisa Jones and Tou Yang with staff representatives Rev. Barb Certa-Werner, Rev. Sue D'Alessio and Sarah Sneider along with Bishop Hee-Soo Jung. Northern Illinois has a counter-part task force chaired by Rev. Myron McCoy.-

By Steven Zekoff

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WE WORSHIP!
WE WITNESS!
