

Sumner Center UMC Newsletter

February 2024



OPEN HEARTS. OPEN MINDS. OPEN DOORS.

Pastors notes....As we enter the second month of the year, also known as the month of Love, I cannot help but center my thoughts around Jesus summary of the 10 commandments in his conversation with the Pharisee's as written in the Gospel of Matthew – “37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[b] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

While Christians often talk about this “new commandment” as one of the most important things Jesus said, I wonder how we, as, His disciples, might help to make this text come alive for our communities. If individuals can hear this text as a calling for their lives as opposed to an affirmation of how they already live, this text could change how they view the world.

It often seems that Christianity is boiled down to the “Golden Rule” of love your neighbor as yourself. The command to love your neighbor as yourself can also be found in Leviticus 19:18. Yet, not many verses later, we find the command to love the alien (stranger) as ourselves in Leviticus 19:34: “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” This brings us face to face with the question “who are our neighbors?” We might wonder what love might look like for these neighbors. If we are to love our neighbors (and strangers) as ourselves, how can we as the church reach out to those people who find themselves walking in a strange land with a hope of a better life for their family. Imagine what our communities might look like if we truly extended a loving hand instead of a shut door with a note attached that read “Go back to where you came from.” Just imagine if we could to see other people as God sees them, and all people as the objects of God’s love.

Living God’s call to love we just might start to see other people as God sees them and we might find that neighbor and stranger are not such different categories after all.

Therefore, as we journey through the month of LOVE let us remember Jesus is not creating a new law. He is summarizing and distilling the Old Testament, as revealed in the Law and Prophets. The entire Old Testament is upheld by these two laws—to love God and to love your neighbor. These two foundational principles shape our interpretation and use of God’s law.

Let us further remember that Christ is the key. He is the fulfillment of the law of God, and reading the law lawfully, as Paul puts it in 1 Timothy 1:8–11, he requires students of the Bible to move from law commanded to law fulfilled. This is the good news. Without Christ, our understanding is darkened, and we are unable to comprehend the teachings of God and their application for us today.

In a hostile world, “love your neighbor” has become the weapon of choice to ingrain approval to the ways of the world. But, in the hands of wise and prudent Christians, we proclaim the good news that Christ has loved us and how we in turn obey God by loving our neighbors. We obey God’s commands because we know that God’s ways are the way that leads to the blessing of all people. In loving our neighbor as God commands, we advance the gospel to the ends of the earth, teaching the nations to observe all that he has commanded.

**Sunday Worship:
In Sanctuary at 11:00am
&
Sumner Center UMC Facebook
Page**

Visit our Church Website at:
<http://www.sumnercenter.com>

**Donations may be sent to our mailing
address:
25378 151st Ave
Spring Valley, Mn 55975**

Pastoral Support Team

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Grace and Peace in the name of Jesus Christ:

If you have items you would like to be published in the newsletter, please contact our church secretary, Norma Kenning, by the 3rd Thursday of the

preceding month by emailing your information to: Racine UMC (rscumc@hmtel.com) Or by bringing your information to Norma during office hours (Thursdays, 5-7) The light of God remains to shine bright in the community of Racine only by your generous giving heart! If you would like to donate a gift, you may send donations to the address above or deliver it in person during Sunday morning worship services.

Calendar of Events

(Subject to change and/or be added to as the need arises)

February 2024

Sunday
Saturday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

				1	2 	3
4 11 am Worship  Food Shelf donation Sunday	5	6	7	8	9	10 Ad Council Meeting 10:30am @ church
11 11 am Worship  SUPER BOWL	12	13 	14  Hosted by: Sumner Center UMC 7pm	15	16	17 
18 11 am Worship	19  Brownsdale UMC Noon Community Potluck	20	21 Lenten gathering 6:00pm meal followed by group discussion. Hosted by: Sargeant UMC	22	23	24
25 11 am Worship	26	27	28 Lenten gathering 6:00pm meal followed by group discussion. Hosted by: Racine UMC	29		

February Worship Schedule

February 4, 2024

Pastor Bridget Leading



Isaiah 40:31 says: "But those who wait for the Lord..." What exactly does this mean, do you think? How can we wait for the Lord? Or aren't we always waiting for the Lord? It is our condition of life, really. Everything we do involves waiting for the Lord. We pray and then we wait. We work and then we wait. We get on with our lives, yet all the while, we are waiting to see what will happen – what the Lord will do. We can't force God's action on anything. We can't ensure that God will respond to our requests in any way that is visible to us. So, waiting on the Lord is what it means to live in the world. Right? We're always waiting.



February 11, 2024

Pastor Jon Leading

Here we are, once again, at the cusp of a change in the season. Today we celebrate The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ as we move from Epiphany into Lent. Thus, today is a day of growing pains and crossing thresholds instigated by the shock of coming face-to-face with glory. In many ways, we start and end this season after Epiphany with revelations of Jesus' fully divine and fully human nature. What we first encounter at the waters of baptism is further revealed in the

Transfiguration.

Pastor Bridget Leading



February 14, 2024 – Ash Wednesday

Hosted by: Sumner Center UMC

7 pm - No Meal served for this Service.



February 18, 2024

Pastor Jon Leading

is the time for us to worship! Now is the time for us to come! So, come, you who in God's sight are perfectly imperfect! Come, you who want more of God! Come, you who heard God remind you. that you are special and loved beyond measure! Come, People of God, those unified in the waters of baptism! Come!

February 25, 2024

Pastor Abigail Leading



What is in a name? Does it matter if your name is Mona, Joanna or Maria, Sebastian, Steven or Juan. Does it matter if you use a nickname or an alias -- or even if other people try to name you. I believe what does matter is that you are known and named by God. When God changed Abram's name, he began the transformation from lonely wanderer to person of God. When Jesus changed Simon's name, he was gradually transformed from sinner into saint. The same God that changed them invites each of us into a Lenten journey of change.

Lent

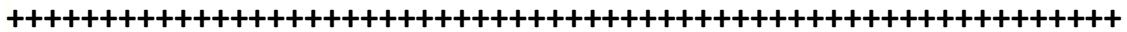


Prairieland Parish will be gathering as Christ's community each week as we rotate Sanctuaries – There will be A light meal starting a 6pm Followed by an informal worship/study.

This is a beautiful opportunity for us to journey though the Lenten season together by uniting as a Parish and accepting each other's invitation to praise of His Name in each other's Holy Sanctuaries.



**February 14, 2024 – Ash Wednesday
Hosted by: Sumner Center UMC
7 pm - No Meal served for this Service.**



**Week 1 - Weds – February 21, 2024
6:00pm meal served
Hosted by: Sargeant UMC**



**Week 2 – Weds – February 28, 2024
6:00pm meal served
Hosted by: Racine UMC**



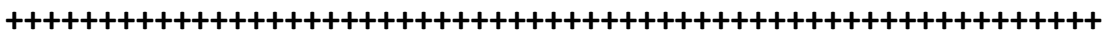
**Week 3 - Weds - March 6, 2024
6:00pm meal served
Hosted by: Brownsdale UMC**



**Week 4 – Weds - March 13, 2024
6:00pm meal served
Hosted by: Wykoff UMC**



**Week 5 – Weds - March 20, 2024
6:00pm meal served
Hosted by: Grand Meadow UMC**

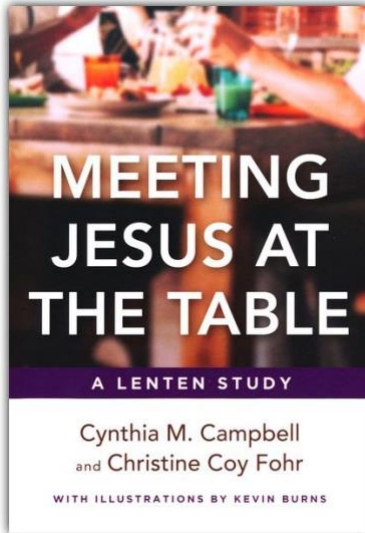


**Good Friday – March 29, 2024
7:00 pm
Hosted by: Dexter UMC**



No Meal served for this Service.

Pastor's Recommendation for a wonderful Lenten Study



Product Description

The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus sharing meals with people. Whether multiplying bread to feed a whole crowd, relaxing with his inner circle, or telling curious elites stories about even greater banquets, Jesus imparts wisdom and forgiveness during meal times. This eight-session study provides biblical insights along with thought-provoking queries regarding our own time, such as whom should we invite to Sunday dinner and who is left out and left behind in our culture today.

Each chapter includes questions for small group discussion or personal reflection. A guide for church leaders offers suggestions for preaching this book as a sermon series and incorporating food-related outreach and hospitality efforts.

Pastor Jon and Pastor Bridget encourage you to journey your way through Lent with the inspirational words written by Cynthia Campbell and Christine Coy Fohr.

Each Wednesday evening as we meet at His table to receive nourishment for our mind, body, and soul we will hold a brief discussion in reference to the guiding words of this book.

It is your option to purchase the book but not required for our weekly gatherings. This is a book study we are offering more for your personal Lenten journey and gives you opportunity each day to spend time with Jesus Christ through the chapters written in the book.

You may purchase this book online at:

Amazon.com - Christianbooks.com - Or other vendors of your choice

Pastor's Jon and Bridget will also have copies of the book available for you for

\$12.00 per book

LET US COME TOGETHER AS WE JOURNEY DOWN THE PATH OF LENT TO THE CROSS AND DESTINATION OF RESURRECTION!



Renewing Our Promises: A Watch Night Message from Bishop Lanette Plambeck



* Please join with me in a spirit of prayer.

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

John Wesley adapted this prayer from the Puritan tradition that was so important to his parents, Samuel and Suzannah, and life in the Epworth rectory. It informed his theology and his preaching. He expected the people called "Methodists" to pray this prayer at the beginning of each new year as a way of remembering and renewing their baptismal covenant. The prayer describes the life of a participant with Christ in Christ's mission. It is a practical description of what Jesus was talking about when he said, 'If any wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9:23). Baptism marks the beginning of life in Christ and his *ecclesia*—a people who "profess to pursue holiness of heart and life; universal love filling the heart and governing the life." The Covenant Prayer helps us remember what this Jesus-way of life looks like and what loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourself requires of us.

When we pray this prayer we remember that we are baptized. We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin. We accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, trust wholeheartedly in his grace, and promise to serve Christ as Lord, in union with the church. And we renew our promise to live as faithful members of Christ's church and serve as his representatives in the world.

The Covenant Prayer describes missional life devoted to following Jesus and serving as Christ's representative in the world he loves and is working to redeem. It tells us that being a Christian is more a way of life than a system of beliefs. The Covenant Prayer describes the Jesus way of self-giving and self-emptying love.

This way of living and loving is possible only in a community centered in the life and mission of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Wesley and the early Methodists annually prayed the Covenant Prayer"

As we think about how we enter into 2024, I would lean us towards the tradition and teaching of Bishop Rueben Job. **What does it mean for us in the practice of ministry, in the way that we are in relationship with one another, in our ministries inside the walls of the church and our expression of ministry outside the walls of the church? What does it mean for us to live in the ethos of doing no harm, of doing intentional good, and attending to the ordinances of God?** Making sure that what we do and why we do it, testifies to the way that we love God and the way that God loves us. What does it look like for us to set that foundation as we seek to reach new people? As we seek to heal a broken world? As we seek to accept all and make a place for the church for all, what does it mean for us to say, these are the things we hold in common? To live and love as this expression of God's grace in The United Methodist Church.

Friends, I welcome you into this new year. I don't think we need to approach it with a bunch of New Year's resolutions that we might lose sight of in the next twenty-four hours. But I do invite you to approach it in the posture of Christ. Christ who has transformed your lives. Christ who guides us and leads us as the Church. Christ who calls us to be a vessel of good news in this world. My friends, may this new year be the best year yet for you and for The United Methodist Church. As together we seek to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, to be a people of the Great Commandment. As together we seek and commit being a people of the Great Commission, going into all places sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. As we walk in the posture of the Great Requirement in Micah, to seek justice, love mercy, and to do so in a posture of humility, always alongside the movement of God.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Lenten Word Search

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Serving Others
Crucifixion
Fasting
Give Up Something
Last Supper
Meditation
Repentance
Sins

Abstinence
Donate Money
Fat Tuesday
Good Friday
Lent
Palm Sunday
Resurrection
Volunteering

Ash Wednesday
Easter
Forty Days
Holy Season
Mardi Gras
Prayer
Reverence

Cross
Entry Into Jerusalem
Fourth Century
Holy Week
Maundy Thursday
Reflection
Scripture