

**FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN .....**

As I write this, on Thursday, May 2, the 2020 General Conference (GC) of the United Methodist Church is winding down. (Nope, that's not a typo. This GC was postponed in 2020 because of the pandemic). From all accounts, this GC has been more fruitful and less contentious than many in the past, surely the previous two or three. That can be attributed to the fact that most of those who had problems with the way many United Methodists were dealing with human sexuality issues in the church have since disaffiliated. Action at long last has been taken to bring the UMC to a consensus as to how those issues are to be dealt with in the future.

UMC clergy and lay leaders in Missouri yesterday received an email from our bishop, Bob Farr, explaining the most relevant of those actions. Here are some highlights of that email:

*"After years of intense and prayerful conversation, the General Conference, comprised of delegates from all over the world, passed legislation that prevents superintendents from penalizing clergy or churches from holding same-gender weddings.*

*I would like to share some important things about this decision. First, there are no requirements that pastors perform weddings for any couple, let alone a same-gender couple. United Methodist pastors have always been able to decide who they will marry within the bounds of the Book of Discipline, and that will continue. There is no mechanism in the Book of Discipline, in our Conference structure, nor desire on my part as your bishop to determine who a pastor will marry.*

*Second, pastors, in consultation with their church leadership team, will continue to determine their building's wedding policy. We know that different people have different opinions on these matters, and our churches are in different contexts within the bounds of Missouri. Pastors should continue to be mindful of those contexts while exercising their own*

*pastoral discretion, the same way they evaluate many theological decisions within their ministry context. Clergy should be in a prayerful consultive process with church leaders if they serve churches where holding a same-gender marriage on church property would bring division within the congregation. Further, the desires of all clergy on the matter of performing a wedding are to be honored and not judged by others.*

*The General Conference also voted to remove restraints from Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to credential gifted and called LGBTQIA people for vocational ministry. Qualified LGBT+ persons approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry can now be licensed, commissioned and ordained effective immediately.*

*As the bishop of the Missouri Conference, the Cabinet and I will continue to work with churches and clergy to ensure we have the best match possible when making appointments. We want everyone to have a vital ministry rather than one defined by conflict. We will identify churches open to an appointment of a LGBT+ pastor so that the pastor can thrive as the congregation's spiritual leader, and their ministry can be fruitful within that church's mission field.*

*I celebrate the ways these recent decisions focus on God's abundant love and inclusiveness. May we continue to become a brave, empowering place for people from diverse cultures and generations so that we can become a Church for all God's people. I also recognize how these decisions will add complexity to our life together as United Methodists.*

*Friends, there is one other thing that will not change. Every United Methodist Church will be open to anybody who seeks to know Christ. This year's annual conference theme is Share the Love of God for All. We will continue to be focused on Christ-centered disciple-making and connecting new people to Christ. Part of our cultural identity as United Methodist people is making room for people to experience the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our communion table is open, and I pray that our hearts might be so as well."*

As always, I am available for conversation if you have questions or concerns relevant to these issues. However, as I have said MANY times before, our

mission as the body of Christ at Paradise United Methodist Church will not change. We will continue to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, water the thirsty, heal the sick, and give hope to the hopeless. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

Blessings on your head!

Pastor Rob

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

The adult Sunday School group is working on a book by Max Lucado, "Help is Here: Finding Fresh Strength and Purpose in the Power of the Holy Spirit." Let us know if you would like to join us at 9:00a.m. on Sunday mornings!

### **CHURCH COUNCIL**

The Church Council will meet on Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, immediately following the worship service. If you are a committee chair, please submit your report to the council via email by Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. Also, please let Shay or Missy know by the same date if you have items you would like included on the agenda.

### **MAY POTLUCK**

No potluck meal in May since it falls on Memorial Day. We will plan to see everyone June!

### **JAM SESSION**

Join us on Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, for a Jam session and games. Bring a snack if you'd like and come on out. You can sing along, listen, play your instrument (all skill levels encouraged!), or bring a game and enjoy!

### **OUTREACH/MISSIONS**

#### **April Recap**

The Smithville Food Pantry 108 boxed meals

Plattsburg Pantry \$280

Noyes Home ("Pink Can") \$230

Native American Special Sunday \$235

**May collections** will be paper towels for the Smithville Food Pantry. The **Trimble** Food Pantry will

be this month and they prefer money so they can purchase what they need. Paradise Cemetery (to offset the cost of upkeep) will be the pink can collection.

**Fishes & Loaves Ministry** (Unhouse ministry with Scott & Darcy)

We will be providing meals for the Langs to serve to the unhoused again on a quarterly basis this year. Tooti has signup sheets on the back counter along with recipes. We will do June 1, August 3 and December 7. Please have your casserole hot and drop it off at the church on those Saturdays (they go along with Rubies & AMen group to try and make it easier). You can also sign up for dessert or side items.

### **PARADISE RUBIES**

The Rubies met at the church on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, for a planning meeting. The June meeting, which will consist of a salad brunch, will be held at the home of Sandra Reeves on Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>. Stay tuned for more information regarding the brunch and future plans for the group.

### **MONTHLY REPORT**

The monthly Report for April 2024 is as follows:

Beginning Balance:	\$62,306.95
General Offerings:	+\$6,567.50
Capital Improvement:	+1,308.85
Expenses:	-\$4,485.15
Final Balance:	\$65,698.15