

APRIL 2020

THE MEETING
HOUSE

WASHINGTON UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

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washunitedmc

Inside This Issue

The Pastor Speaks 1

SPPRC & Financials 2

Missions & Mikes 2

Just So You Know 3

Online Messages 4

Birthdays/Anniversaries 11

PASTOR SPEAKS . . . This 'n That

I am writing this article wondering when we can get back together in the sanctuary. Next Sunday morning, Palm Sunday, would have been ideal so we could celebrate Jesus' entering Jerusalem with the waving of palm branches and singing, but it's most likely not going to happen. We may visualize Hosanna in the highest, but the COVID-19 outbreak and its rapid spread across our country plays havoc with our expectations.

Sadly, we couldn't have Sunday worships at the sanctuary the last two Sundays. Yes, it is getting quite serious. We don't know yet when it stops. However, I don't like to allow something else, rather than myself, to control me no matter what it is. In this case the coronavirus pandemic is bigger than any of us. I pray for you to stay well and safe.

One of the main reasons we cannot be together for worship at the sanctuary is that we are strongly encouraged to keep social distancing. This means to avoid meetings and gatherings of more than 10 people. Small gatherings help to flatten the curve of the virus spread. To keep social distancing is a way of loving and caring for ourselves and others as well. It is a way of telling others, "I care about you and you are important." We are trying to express our heart of love and care for one another in a most nontraditional, but very important way. We are asked to obey.

As I shared with you Sunday, March 22, Jesus teaches us what is the point of the faithful journey we are walking along with Jesus, no matter what happens around us. It is the most important and greatest commandment Jesus commands us to follow: "Love your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbors as yourself."

Fortunately, we, Christians, are excellent in communicating with God even though God is invisible and impalpable. We cannot see or touch God physically. However, we believe and feel God's loving presence among us.

As you practice social distancing, please remember that this is a right time to practice and learn how to look at God's works and how to see others into our hearts just like Jesus does. Pray to God at your place. You can communicate with God in prayer.

As you know, we are doing an online service on Sundays. I upload a prerecorded worship message on our Facebook page: (www.facebook.com/WashUnitedMC) and also on the church website: (<http://washingtongumc.com/online-worship>). You can go to the church Facebook page or the church website and join me in worship at 10 a.m. on Sunday.

A pastoral care letter to clergy from our bishop Laurie Haller arrived this afternoon. WUMC should have "a triumphant Easter celebration at a future date when it is safe for communities of faith to gather in person."

Speaking of offering, you are encouraged to keep supporting WUMC financially. Continue to pay your pledge and regular offerings. You can find an easy and brief direction of how to support WUMC financially in Tim's article in this edition of *The Meeting House*.

Lastly, if you are the one in need, please reach out and ask for assistance. If you need help, please call the church office, pastor Kwang, or Tim Johnson. The Church office is staffed from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Church Office 319-653-5446
Pastor Kwang 319-541-2631
Tim Johnson, Financial Secretary, 319-461-5294

Staff Parish Updates

Committee is accepting applications to fill the Church Secretary position. Application deadline was March 16 with interviews tentatively set for the week of March 23. Please include the search process in your thoughts and prayers.

The search for a Director of Youth and Small Group Ministries has been put on hold. Committee members recognize a need to grow church membership and enhance the community's religious opportunities, but national issues (stock market ups and downs, farm prices, job stability, coronavirus, and the like) demonstrate the need for financial conservation.

The Church Directory update is nearing completion. The intent is to have your copy available within the next six to eight weeks.

Staff Parish committee members include Lori Bauer, Sally Beezley, Dave Birney, Margi Jarrard, Becky Kaufman, Pastor Kwang, Connie Larsen, Mike Moore, Vic Patterson, Abby Schnicker, Gerry Sproule, and Evan Young. Each of us welcome your input and will share with committee members your ideas and concerns.

Sally Beezley, Chair

Financial Secretary Notes

During this unusual time, when we are encouraged to stay indoors and visit church online instead of in person, please do not forget to continue giving to your church.

Here are three viable giving options for individuals and families to support the church:

- 1) Call Tim with bank name, routing number, and account number to set up recurring donations. This takes a couple of days to process but will automatically debit your bank account with whatever amount and date you choose.
- 2) A telephone donation may be made by calling Vanco at 800-675-7430 and choosing the Client Services option (by pressing 1 when prompted). You will need to let the client service team member know that you would like to make a donation for the United Methodist Church in Washington, IA. You will need to either have their banking information (routing number and account number) or debit / credit card.
- 3) Mail a check directly to the church office. The mailing address is
Washington United Methodist Church
206 West 2nd Street
Washington, IA 52353

If you have any questions, please feel free to call the office Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Thank you!
Tim Johnson

**Year-to-Date Financials
Through March 24, 2020**

General Fund	Actual Income	Actual Expenses
This month	15,088	17,093
Year to date	45,224	56,790

Midwest Mission Distribution Center is a place of Mission for United Methodists

Midwest Mission collects, makes, assembles and restores supplies for humanitarian and disaster relief. Supplies are given free of charge regardless of gender, race or religion. Midwest Mission connects with local aid organizations by providing items that are received that do not meet kit requirements. The work is done by volunteers who come from all over the U.S. to serve. The 30,000 square-foot facility is located on an 8-acre campus 4 miles south of Springfield, Illinois. They partner with Food for the Poor, Franciscan Mission Warehouse, Christians in Mission, and U.S. Military South Command donating supplies to humanitarian aid mission in Latin & South America, Caribbean and Africa.

Midwest Mission Kits

All instructions and patterns are at <http://www.midwestmission.org/kits-projects/patterns>

Personal Dignity Kit "PDK"

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Bath Hand Towel - no kitchen towels | 1 Adult Tooth brush - no multipacks |
| 1 Bath Washcloth - no kitchen dishcloths | 1 Toothpaste - 2.5 oz or larger |
| 1 Comb - sturdy - no rattail or picks | 1 Bar Soap - 3-4 oz |
| 1 Razor - with guard | 1 Shampoo - 15-18 oz |
| 1 Nail Clippers - no files or emery boards | 1 Deodorant - 2-3 oz stick, roll on or pump |
| 10 Band-Aids - 3/4" by 3" | |

VALUE \$15 plus \$2 shipping

Place in 1-gallon resealable bag

Feminine Hygiene Kit

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 One-Handle Cloth Bag | 2 1-Gallon Resealable Plastic Bags |
| 1 Washcloth | 1 Bar Soap 3-4 oz |
| 3 Pair of Underwear - sizes: child 10, 12, 14/women - 5, 6, 7, 8 | |
| 6 Day Pads and 3 Night Pads | |

VALUE \$40 plus \$2 shipping

Place all items in one-handle cloth bag

About Sanctuary Microphones

We recently learned that the FCC reallocated the 600 MHz frequency band for wireless broadband use. Thus, our wireless microphone systems cannot be used later this summer. While this may seem like an inconvenience for the church, it gives us an opportunity to update the aging system and improve on overall sound quality. A nice perk to the overall situation is that the manufacturer of the wireless microphones we use is offering a trade-in rebate program to help bring down the cost of the replacement system. We plan to take advantage of the trade-in rebate and install the new wireless system in the coming weeks. With luck we will have the new system installed by the time we are able to hold live services in the sanctuary again.

Palm Sunday **April 5, 2020**
Good Friday **April 10, 2020**
Easter Sunday **April 12, 2020**



All are special days for United Methodists – and it looks more and more like we will observe them online. The COVID-19 pandemic dictates a very different normal for each of us. The President has asked all citizens to continue social distancing through the end of April to aid in slowing and ending the pain and suffering.

The recommended good hygiene measures continue to be crucial to all. They include:

- ✚ Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface.
- ✚ Avoid touching your face.
- ✚ Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- ✚ Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.

A heartfelt Thank You from Martha Lowe . . .

Thank you for my beautiful rose for my 97th birthday. It was also nice to be remembered with cards from my church friends. May God Bless you all. – Martha Lowe

A special request from the family of Jim Munn . . .

Jim Munn is now residing at McCreedy Home; Room 1505 – Bed 1; 400 East Polk Street; Washington, IA
He would enjoy visitors or mail. – Oma Munn



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March 22 and March 29 Sermons

Pastor's online messages of March 22 and March 29 are included with *The Meeting House* this month. It is his wish that they help you through the challenges that have been a part of our lives for the past few weeks.

Mark 12:28-34 – Teachings: Risking Challenge

Online Worship Service, 3/22/2020

In this season of Lent, we are following along Jesus' steps, particularly during his final week in Jerusalem. It started with Jesus' entering the city of Jerusalem welcomed by the crowd shouting Hosanna in the Highest at Jesus. It followed by Jesus' rage and anger at those who were selling and buying at the temple courts. It was at people and their attitude of mind and heart as coming to God, rather than at the businesses going on at the temple. Throughout Passover week, actually Jesus stayed with his disciples in Bethany, a small town in the outskirts of Jerusalem. It might be a 20- or 30-minute walk, far from the east wall of Jerusalem. We guess Jesus stayed in Lazarus' place by night and came to Jerusalem by day.

It was the third day of the week, on Tuesday, Jesus went back to the Temple with his disciples. He might try to find a better moment to teach God's wisdom in a portico, an open space for anyone to make public speaking or discussion among the people in the Temple courts.

In the book of Mark, we can find a long discourse and teachings Jesus delivered there from Chapters 11 through 13. His teaching got started with a provocative question about his authority raised by the chief priests, the legal experts, and elders. They approached Jesus with a hidden agenda to humiliate Jesus with tough and tricky questions and find any charge to kill him.

His responses and teachings covered various issues about authority—by what authority did Jesus throw out the merchants and turn over the money tables?—, about paying tax—is it right to pay tax to Caesar or not?—, about resurrection—if a woman got married to seven men, who will be her husband at the resurrection?—, and about the law—which commandment is the greatest among them all?—. All these questions are difficult to give simple answers, but Jesus made this an opportunity to expose their wrong ideas and to share God's wisdom with people as well.

However, it is for Jesus to take great risk of losing his own life because his teaching would escalate their enmity against/hostility toward Jesus. As we can read in the gospels, the Jewish religious and political leaders, such as the chief priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and elders, were seeking an opportunity to arrest him and kill him at any time. His teaching and wisdom challenged the people to rethink all things around them and in them. His teaching challenged people to redesign not only their personal lives but also how to run the community.

Jesus took risks of being misunderstood and even arrested and executed due to the teachings he taught at the temple. His teaching at the temple was not just a matter of miscommunication or misunderstanding. It is a matter of challenge to the mainstream institutions and culture. And Jesus' teachings led him to suffering, humiliation, and death on the cross. He takes risk of even unjust dying. When you are taught God's wisdom from Jesus through the gospel stories, what do they mean to you? What kind of risks are you willing to take?

Teaching is not just getting insights and knowledge which make us excited. We live in highly developed society in technology. We can access information through the internet and social media. And most of all, we can worship online. We hardly make excuses of lack of knowledge anymore. If you have a research project on a certain subject, you'd better go to google it. However, when Jesus takes risk of teaching, he takes risk of dying because of the wisdom he taught. If we follow Jesus as his disciples, it doesn't mean we can get a kind of proof of knowledge, but it is to live out the wisdom.

There were various kind of people around Jesus: Those who were friendly to him and his teaching to get great insight and even change the direction of their own lives. Those who were hostile to him and very angry at his teaching which was considered to be so dangerous to instigate riot against the Roman Empire. They regarded Jesus and his teachings as serious and immediate threats to the current system. If you go back to the early stage of church history, you can see a good many of Christians killed by the Roman authority and Jewish religious leaders as well just because they followed what they believed is right. One of the main charges was to call Jesus as the Lord, rather than the Roman emperor whom all the residents in Roman territory were supposed to call. When the early Christians called Jesus as their Lord, they didn't mean anything but following the steps Jesus had taken and they had asked to take.

They didn't mean to go against the Roman Empire. They didn't ever try to make a rebellion against the Roman Empire. They just want to be faithful followers of Jesus and his wisdom. They had different teachings and wisdoms than the contemporary ones which made them to be arrested, tortured and executed.

When I was in seminary, I was fascinated with a Brazilian archbishop Dom Helder Camara who had inspired Liberation theology movement in South America, served the poor, and stood against the military dictatorship for people. One of his famous teachings is this: "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint, when I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist." I think his only concern was about poor and weak people. He just pursued the steps Jesus took: to help people. He just tried to raise a voice for the voiceless and the underprivileged. He was just seeking to get to the deep root of the poverty and help people to live the life God meant them to live.

The gospel, the great wisdom and teaching of what the life living in grace looks like, is a great challenge to us because it nudges us to look our conscience and makes us feel uncomfortable with something wrong inside us and helps us examine ourselves.

Do you know why the gospel has power to change people and the world? Because the gospel was embodied in Jesus' acts, specifically his sacrifice. Jesus taught and lived out godly wisdom and commandments throughout his life and they reached their peak when he sacrificed himself on the cross. He taught and showed the truth. He showed the way how to embody the truth and reach at the truth. He provided the life through his life. He took the risk of losing everything he had because he taught us to live that way.

Today's gospel scripture we just read is a part of temple teachings Jesus taught at the temple courts. It is about the greatest commandment. One of the legal experts who admired all those answers and teachings Jesus did raised a really important question to Jesus. It was about the law, the Moses' law. There were lots of laws and regulations, allegedly 613 in Moses' law, and it was always an issue what is the key commandments

among them to support all others. It's like the preamble to the constitution: the fundamental purposes and guiding principles for all the laws and regulations.¹

Jesus summarized all those laws and regulations to a single sentence: "Love your God and Love your neighbor as yourself." Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And the second is "Love your neighbors as yourself." This is so simple to help us to apply the laws in our lives, in the light of the greatest commandment, no matter how many laws there might be. Actually, loving God and people is the primary source of all the passion he had.

We are going through a very scary time NOW. This is so unusual. No one here has faced this kind of threat before. It is very sad that we cannot worship together here in this beautiful sanctuary in person. Honestly, I don't know how long it goes. I hope we can get back together here on Easter Sunday and celebrate our Lord's resurrection and our getting over these things. However, I don't know if it's going to happen or not.

In WAMA meeting on Thursday noon at TLC, nine pastors from this community got together to discuss what we can do in this time of fear and worry. We talked about streaming service on Sundays, how to keep connected with our congregation, and how to help our community.

One of them we discussed was about the Easter Sunday. One of pastors suggested to postpone the Easter Sunday to later day because we are unlikely to have the Easter service in person on Easter Sunday, April 12, three Sundays away from today. I totally agree with the suggestion because the point of Easter Sunday is to celebrate Jesus' resurrection and feel the reality of the power of resurrection now here in our everyday lives and in our community together. So why not we set another Sunday we can feel safe as Easter Sunday this time? And actually, every Sunday is Easter Sunday. We celebrate life, eternal life, new life in grace and love of God every Sunday. This is the reason we come to church. So, if we celebrate Jesus and his love and care, every Sunday (even every day) can be the day of resurrection, the Lord's day, no matter where we do it.

Speaking of social distancing that we are strongly asked to practice. It is a way of loving and caring for ourselves and others as well we can practice. It is a way of telling others I care about you and you are important. We don't get together here because it is time to practice the most important regulation in nontraditional but very important way we are asked to obey.

But, remember this: If we just keep social distancing without grace and heart of care and love for one another, it is going to make us lonely and isolated. However, if we practice social distancing as a way of expressing a caring heart for one another, it's going to help one another feel we are still together in distance. I want to call it Grace beyond distance.

Fortunately, we, Christians, are pretty excellent in feeling God's presence invisible and impalpable. We cannot physically see or touch God. However, we believe and feel God's loving presence among us. I want to remind you of a passage from 1 Samuel: it says "God doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) As you practice social distancing, please remember that this is a good time to practice and learn how to look at God's works and how to see others into the heart just as Jesus does.

¹ "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Mark 4:35-41 – Where Is Your Faith?

Online Worship Service, 3/29/2020

A church I once served at as an associate pastor has a beautiful retreat center in a forest on the outskirts of Seoul. It is situated in a peacefully quiet spot in a deep forest. There are gathering places of all sizes and lodges where visitors can stay. The most impressive site was a trail park for walking prayer. Visitors could walk across several stations that had symbolic statues of Jesus' earthly ministry. At least once a month, I visited the retreat center with prayer groups for special walking prayer meetings along this trail. The popular favorite was a bronze statue of Jesus standing on the edge of a boat with his arms outstretched over the whitecaps of the raging sea. It was the one symbolizing the event that today's gospel passage tells.

The place where the statue marked the end of the trail, so we had the closing worship there. It was a very soul-touching place to us because we got courage and hope from Jesus there. We felt Jesus' presence encouraging us to have strong faith to overcome all those difficulties we had been through. Every time I visited with my prayer group, I felt that Jesus asked us, "Where is your faith. Show me your faith. In this time of scare."

Now, I feel Jesus keeps asking me the same challenging question, "Where is your faith. Show me your faith." It is definitely clear that it is a very scary time now: The coronavirus is spreading around us so quickly and most of us feel helpless. The number of patients infected by the virus is growing, and medical staffs and government officials endeavor to flatten the curve that our medical capacity can control this overwhelming situation.

It is terrifying situation, but I would like you to know this could be an opportunity to get reminded of the most precious thing in life. We are learning that life is not about what we have but what we love and believe. We are caring about one another as we are going through all this together. We are told that this is not going to end soon that it is important to keep practicing social distancing and following CDC protocol about personal hygiene. But I don't think it means that we lose trust and power of love.

Let's see the gospel scripture today. Jesus asks his disciples, "Where is your faith?" As I first read this story, I wonder at his asking because Jesus didn't seem to care about the dangerous situation the disciples faced, although Jesus eventually got up and calmed the storm. He seemed only concerned about their response to the situation: I know what this story intends to tell us. But, considering the situation we face now, my heart got frustrated with the part of Jesus' calm response, honestly speaking, too calm and cold response. As we can see in the scripture here, their immediate response in the storm was not much different than me: to be wondering at Jesus: He was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow until frightened disciples woke him. What do you feel about it? How would you respond to it? You might be wondering why Jesus just didn't get them out of the situation. You get into a panic, or to be terrified.

As I already shared with you after I had an eye surgery last Summer, I was so ashamed when I had a panic attack in the middle of the surgery. I hadn't ever expected it happened to me. All through the surgery, I was covered by sheets from head to toe but my left eye. For most of the time, I fell asleep and sometimes woke up. I was able to hear the noises but not see while I was awake. Out of the blue, at a certain point of the surgery, I couldn't breathe. Physically, I was breathing because the respirator helped me keep breathing. But I felt I wasn't able to breathe. I desperately tried to take the cover off and started to exclaim, "I can't breathe, please take the cover off. I cannot breathe." But the surgeon sounded very calm, "it's ok. it's gonna be ok." Yes, it was true, and I knew either. But I couldn't feel I was breathing. And then the anesthetist must have injected more anesthetic because I think I got back to sleep.

I knew I was breathing, and it was just a sort of a panic attack. But my heart was pounding with a shortness of breath. I was seized with fear of getting confined under this bed sheet forever and I wasn't able to move. I wasn't able to control my body. Fear did completely take over me. The cause of the panic attack in my case was fear of losing myself, fear of losing control.

What's wrong with me and our lives? How come we are sometimes falling into a panic in our lives? I think we fall in sorts of panic, when we try to control things we cannot control. There are too many things out of our control. Honestly, I am wondering if there still remain things we can control. I don't feel there is. For now, you might feel 'I can't control even myself, let alone any other things, such as this one, coronavirus outbreak and pandemic.' We cannot but feel terrified and helpless.

As I recall this shameful experience, I just shared with you, I realized Jesus tries to help me not just get me out of the situation when I feel I am confined but out of a stubborn and foolish idea that I have. 'I may control that I feel I am ok.'

Here is the bottom line: The reason we feel abandoned by Jesus in a time of storm is not because we are actually abandoned by God but because we feel that way. Speaking of Jesus' disciples, they couldn't recognize or feel God's presence. They assumed that Jesus wasn't with them and didn't care for them. The problem was their lack of faith, not Jesus' absence nor his indifference so that they are captured by fear of the deadly raging storm. The problem was not the stormy winds and waves but their response to the situation they were in, caught by fear of a stormy sea.

They just expect Jesus to perform miracles to get them out of the difficult and painful reality. But Jesus expects them to face the reality they face no matter what it is. Jesus concerns about their unfaithful response rather than the bad and difficult situation they face. Jesus wants them to face the reality they face with an unshakable faith, rather than to run away from hard and painful situations they are in.

This is the reason Jesus asked them "where is your faith?" This question brings them back to face the troubles and difficulties they meet. Jesus says I am here with you and I am not going to leave you alone no matter what you are going through. Jesus asks us to stand in strong faith facing the storms.

We are getting through a horrible storm now, and it is scary. How do you deal with the fear you are facing? Not letting the fearful storm hold over you and swamp you. Rather, face the stormy reality in strong faith with a heart of love of God. Apostle John once said, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear." (1 John 4:18) This is time for us to do away with our fears through facing the reality we are in. This is time for us to be filled with love through seeing the cross. This is time for us to face the reality together. Because we listen to Jesus' voice from the scripture today, "Peace. Be still."

Good Friday Live-streaming Service @ 7:00 PM
go to www.facebook.com/WashUnitedMC

Online Easter Sunday Service is on the Facebook
Following Bishop Laurie Haller's recommendation,
the Easter Celebration is postponed to a future date
when it is safe for us to gather in person.