

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church

Mission and Purpose

Jesus gave a mission to his disciples and so to the church: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” The mission of the United Methodist Church is “to make disciples for Jesus for the transformation of the world.” The mission of Hillsdale First United Methodist Church is to “love God and neighbor, make disciples of Jesus Christ, and serve others.”

When Jesus gave his commission, the disciples didn’t really know what it meant. Oh, they knew about baptism, and together they could recall what Jesus had commanded and taught. But they didn’t really understand exactly what being a disciple and making disciples meant. They were committed to Jesus though, and while they might argue among themselves about the right way to do things, they began to tell the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Soon congregations were being formed where people “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42) The disciples were learning that making disciples began with their own solid commitment to being a disciple themselves, obedient to the commandments of Jesus Christ.

It’s the same for us. Our mission, our commission from Jesus, is the same today as it was for the first disciples 2000 years ago. We, as disciples of Jesus Christ who are growing every day in experience and knowledge of what that means, still go out seeking those who do not have a relationship with God and inviting them into one.

Through a process of discernment, the Administrative Board of this congregation has committed the church to doing that in two ways: 1) through the provision of free meals; and 2) through a community concert series. Both ways provide a means of invitation, of hospitality, and of initiating individual relationships.

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But the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ doesn’t end with the meal or with the concert. The mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ is a long-term endeavor—one that begins with an invitation and continues in building a relationship for the purpose of making a disciple for Jesus Christ. That relationship absolutely must be grounded in a growing faith and surrounded in prayer.

I remember one woman who was in the church we attended back when we were a young couple. She was a role model for me. Back then, I thought that she was old, but she was probably younger then than I am now. She was kind, generous, helpful, and willing to talk with me about faith and doubt, hurts and joys, losses and love.

By simply being a disciple she grew a new disciple ... in Jesus’ name. | *Pastor Pat*

Education News and Notes

In addition to our weekly opportunities to reach children every Sunday, we plan special events during the year to invite children into the church. Two of those events are coming up in June and July.

Outreach Opportunities and Experiences

Wednesday, June 15

Kids' Fest Booth
9:30 am - 3:00 pm
Fairgrounds

Monday-Thursday July 11-14

Vacation Bible School
5:00 pm - 7:30 pm
Hillsdale First UMC

Bible Study Schedules

Tuesdays, 7:00 am
Wednesdays, 9:30 am
Wednesdays, 6:00 pm
First Light Bible Study
Lounge

Tuesdays, 7:00 pm
Young Adult Bible Study
Hickok Room

Wednesdays, 6:00 pm
Men's Bible Study
Hickok Room

Kids' Fest | On Wednesday, June 15, we will once again have a booth at the annual Kids' Fest at the fairgrounds. There are numerous volunteer opportunities all day on June 15 to meet and talk with children and families about all that the church has to offer, including weekly worship with children's church, Vacation Bible School, and Music Camp. Booth setup can be done on Tuesday afternoon or on Wednesday morning, and volunteers are welcome. The booth needs to be completely ready by 9:30 am, and the event will run from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. In the past we have provided crafts and free items for approximately 1000 children! We will have registration forms available for both Vacation Bible School and Music Camp. Come and share the love of Jesus with the children of our community!

Vacation Bible School—Cave Quest: Following Jesus, the Light of the World | Vacation Bible School will be Monday, July 11 - Thursday, July 14 from 5:00 pm - 7:30 pm. Each evening will start with music, worship, and a light supper, which will be followed by a couple of hours of fun and learning! Games, crafts, fellowship, and music will fill our hearts and minds with the love of Jesus. Volunteer opportunities include decorating; leading worship or a small group; helping with food, crafts, games, or music; and praying for our children and helpers. How is God calling you to nurture and love the children at Hillsdale First UMC? Come and be the light of Christ for our neighbors who are children. God loves you! And so do I! | Marla



You can contact me at church on Sunday or Tuesday mornings, or anytime by email at bowen.hillsdalefirstumc@gmail.com.

Over the last several weeks of our Lenten soup suppers we discussed the parable of the

lost and found sheep, coin, and son and learned of the abundant grace and celebration that surrounded those. During our discussions I often thought about how I relate those stories to my own life experiences. Recently, abundant grace and celebration found me in a place I never thought it would.

Our family had a very real scare a couple of weeks ago. Our oldest sister had a heart attack, and all of my siblings were called to the hospital. I was at work when the calls started lighting up my cell phone, and after hearing their voicemails, I immediately headed to Cameron Hospital in Angola, Indiana. In that panicked mode we were all just trying to reach each other and know who was where. My sister Beth was in Ann Arbor taking our sister-in-law to the doctor; my sister Jill was on her mail route in Ohio; my brother Danny was at home; and I had been in a meeting at work. In those brief moments, everything changed for us, and as I approached the highway, I prayed, “please Lord, bring us peace.” It was determined that our sister Jann was going to be transferred to the Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne. Once we all reached Fort Wayne, the waiting began and the hours ticked by as the doctor scheduled more tests.

As the day passed, realizing that it was going to be very late before we would be heading home, I remembered that I still had a tail light and brake light out on my car, which had been recently pointed out to me by our friendly police. Knowing that my other two sisters would be riding home with me, their safety became my concern. It was 6:15 pm when I made a call to the mechanic. A gentleman answered but said that his shop was already closed. I briefly explained my situation and asked if he might know of another place near Lutheran Hospital where I might be able to get my lights fixed. Without hesitation he told me that if I wanted to come to his shop, that he would fix the lights for me. I was surprised, since he had already told me he was closed, but he reassured me that he’d be glad to do it. I had lived in Fort Wayne years ago so I knew the area where his shop was and headed that way. When I arrived he said

“I’m glad to see you found it okay.” As we chatted, I said that if he thought it would be more than \$33, I’d need to run to an ATM. He again reassured me.

As I waited in his small office, I noticed a wooden plaque engraved with the scripture: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) There were also two drawings of Jesus on the wall among other clippings and certifications. I thought to myself how wonderful it was that everyone who entered that office was surrounded by Jesus and scripture. After about a half hour he came into the office through the side door from the shop and told me that he had replaced the tail light and brake light, but also had found some corrosion, so he drilled some holes in the base of the trunk lid so water wouldn’t pool in there anymore. He said he had also changed the front blinker light and one of the brake lights in my rear window. I was amazed at how much care he took in his job, especially since his shop was already closed when I called. With my money in hand I asked him how much it would cost, and he said “nothing”. I held out the money I had and suggested that he use it to go get dinner or something. He just continued to say that he was glad to help. I thanked him and left the shop with a very thankful heart.

As I was leaving his parking lot, thanking God, I noticed an envelope on my console. I stopped and opened it, thinking that it was a list of the lights that he had changed out. But when I looked into the envelope, what I found inside made me instantly realize that what I was experiencing was abundant grace. There in the envelope was a fifty dollar bill and his simple business card. Tears of joy welled in my eyes as I hurried back to the hospital, and like those who celebrated and rejoiced in the parable, I couldn’t wait to share the good news of what I had found ... for I have seen the Lord!

My sister is now home and doing well, and I know that we received the peace I prayed for that day. And peace does equal grace—abundant grace! Peace was there in a call to my best friend calming my worries while I drove to the hospital; it was there in the love of all my siblings being able to be at the hospital together; and it was there in the abundant grace offered by a stranger. | *Melodie*

**2016
Community Concerts**

All at 4:00 pm

Sunday, April 17
Kalamazoo Ringers
Handbell Choir

Sunday, September 18
Double Play:
Flute/Tuba Duo

Late October
John Ourensma
Annual Organ Recital

Early December
Hillsdale First UMC
Annual Christmas Program

Past Concerts

The King of Kings
1927 Silent Movie
accompanied on the organ
by John Schwandt

Cameron Wilkens
Piano Concert

Bradley Welch
Organ Concert

Covenant Players
Drama Team

John Ferguson
Festival of Song
Choral and Instrumental
Concert

From the Director of Music

The second program of our 2016 Community Concert Series is coming up on Sunday, April 17 at 4:00 pm. The Kalamazoo Ringers, under the direction of the ensemble's founder and conductor, Janet Van Valey, will offer us a very diverse program of music for handbell choir. The group plays a set of bells that cover six octaves as well as a seven-octave set of hand chimes. The range of tone and color this group makes is truly astounding. And, as you know, watching a handbell choir is just plain fun! This fabulous event once again makes for a great opportunity to invite someone to come to the program with you. Invite them, offer them a ride, sit with them, introduce them to others, encourage them to come to the reception downstairs – help make this event an opportunity to show God's love through you, and through the music and fellowship we can experience together.

As we continue our Community Concert Series into its third year, some have asked how this series got started, how it is managed, and how it is funded.

The idea of sharing musical concerts with the community started during my interview process in the summer of 2012. The interview committee asked me what sorts of things we might do to reach out to the community with music in a meaningful, uniquely Christian way. We talked of many things, but one of the obvious ideas was to begin some sort of concert/worship outreach.

The first concert offered in this outreach effort was my solo organ recital in October 2013. Perhaps the most intense part of that first program was the publicity effort that included radio spots, newspaper ads, direct mailings to Hillsdale County churches, posters, and lots of word-of-mouth invitations. I was very surprised and happy with the attendance at that first concert and felt confident that our Christmas program in December 2013 might also be well-received. We repeated our now standard (but still evolving) two-week publicity blitz for that *Share the Good News* Christmas program and again had a great crowd.

Several elements were clearly important in the success of those first concerts – quality programs with a distinctive Christian emphasis; strong and attractive publicity; great receptions; and warm, inviting hospitality. We were also very open about offering all this in the name of Christ – because, as a church, we must do our best to do as Jesus asks of us.

When plans were being developed for the celebration in 2014 of our 150th year of ministry in this location, I offered the possibility of continuing the concert series idea on an annual basis, given the relative success of the first two concerts. For the November 2014 anniversary celebration, I suggested a *Festival of Song* featuring John Ferguson and proposed additional concerts under the umbrella of "150 years of ministry at 45 North Manning Street". The Administrative Board approved special funding for the anniversary concert schedule from which the 2014 concert series materialized. While not all of the programs were equally well-attended, the 2014 concert year was also successful.

Sharing the gift of music in the name of Christ

More importantly, we were continually improving our publicity efforts and refining our purpose and mission statement for those concerts. In our publicity, in remarks before each concert, and in our efforts to engage all of you in the work of invitation and hospitality, we also became more overt and articulate about declaring that we provide these musical offerings in the name of Christ.

Based on the success of previous concerts and a growing sense that the Community Concert Series was becoming an effective and worthwhile outreach in the name of Christ, the concert budget became a part of the annual music budget for 2015. The overall concert series attendance for 2015 was steady with occasional increases over previous years. Any series has to build a good reputation and gain the public's trust that every program will be very good. This takes consistent work on the part of those who produce the programming and publicity, but it also simply takes a few years for that concept to play out.

Near the end of 2015, a budget was once again approved for a series of five concerts in 2016. The first program in this year's line-up was the unique presentation of *The King of Kings* silent movie just a few weeks ago. Other than our annual Christmas concerts, this was easily the best-attended program of any we've offered. Coming up is the amazing *Kalamazoo Ringers* program on April 17. The series resumes in the fall when we'll have *Double Play*, a unique and unlikely duo of a tuba and flute on September 18; my own annual recital in late October; and our annual Christmas program in early December.

Our Community Concert Series began as a part of, and continues to be organized and produced by, the music department. But from the beginning, there has been a strong team effort all around, and the support and work of the church staff and volunteers has been amazing. A special thanks to Reneé Nestorak for bringing her graphic and organizational skills to these concerts, and to Jan Tesch and Sue Walter for organizing the lavish receptions after each program. Also thanks to Melodie Coles and Pam Laurell who have headed up greeting and ushering for all of the programs since the beginning. And thanks to all of you, for "talking it up".

As with all of our church's programming, particularly those that are intentionally designed to be shared with the community around us – since everything we do really should be – we're offering the Community Concert Series out of obedience to Jesus' command to get out there to show and spread the love of God in many different ways. I pray that this outreach will continue to be one of several exciting opportunities our church offers so that each of us may invite others to come and experience God's love. | SDG, JO

The Kalamazoo Ringers *Handbell Choir*

Sunday, April 17 at 4:00 pm



Led by Janet Van Valey

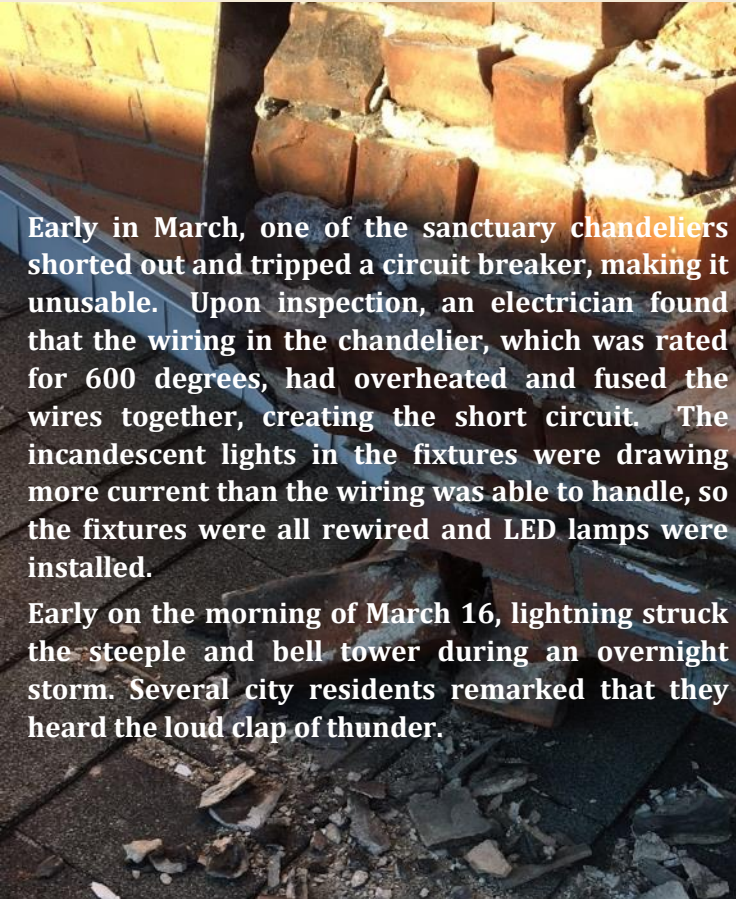
Free admission

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church
2016 Community Concert Series
Sharing the gift of music in the name of Christ

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church
45 North Manning Street Hillsdale, MI 49242 | 517-437-3681
www.hillsdalefirstumc.com | www.facebook.com/HillsdaleFirstUMC

Building Notes

We encountered some serious problems with the church building during the month of March. A problem with the sanctuary lighting was discovered, and the steeple and bell tower sustained damage from a lightning strike.



Early in March, one of the sanctuary chandeliers shorted out and tripped a circuit breaker, making it unusable. Upon inspection, an electrician found that the wiring in the chandelier, which was rated for 600 degrees, had overheated and fused the wires together, creating the short circuit. The incandescent lights in the fixtures were drawing more current than the wiring was able to handle, so the fixtures were all rewired and LED lamps were installed.

Early on the morning of March 16, lightning struck the steeple and bell tower during an overnight storm. Several city residents remarked that they heard the loud clap of thunder.



Church staff first became aware of a problem when internet access was unavailable. A Comcast technician responded promptly and restored internet access after finding that an outdoor ground splitter had been melted by the lightning strike. Steeple damage is still clearly visible from the south parking lot, and masonry damage to the tower is visible from North Street.

The lightning strike propelled some bricks and flashing across the street, and bricks and debris were visible on the roof. The steeple remains unstable, leaning a bit to the east, but has stayed in place through high wind advisories since the storm. For pedestrian safety, the fire department cordoned off the sidewalk and front lawn with caution tape. Braman Roofing will remove the steeple by crane in coming weeks. The tower might also require inspection to ensure structural integrity. Roofing and masonry repairs are in process, and we are working with a Church Mutual Insurance adjuster on property damage and loss claims.

Staff, church members, contractors, and the adjuster have researched the building for further damage. The organ, sanctuary projector, balcony computer, and a microphone were damaged. Music Director, John Ourensma, was able to fix the organ circuitry. Lighting in the first floor stairway and hallway was also impacted, along with the lounge TV and the youth room dehumidifier. Damage has been inventoried for insurance purposes, and items are in various stages of repair or replacement.

Either of these events could have easily sparked a fire causing much more extensive damage. Fortunately, there were no fires and church activities have proceeded as scheduled.

Renovation and Feasibility

Nearly three years ago, the Administrative Board authorized the creation of a Building Study Committee to assess the facility needs to support the present and future ministries of the congregation. The Committee engaged John Brown of the architectural firm Selzer Associates to assist in the process. John made several weekend visits assessing the current facilities and helping the committee to articulate present and future ministries. Selzer Associates then provided the committee with some general recommendations to address those needs including: better signage, a drop-off lane, a centrally located elevator, compliance with American Disability Act requirements, reconfiguration of rooms on the office level to provide more flexibility, and a use of paint colors and historic moldings to accent architectural elements in the sanctuary.

After much discussion and a congregational meeting, Selzer Associates was engaged to create a Master Plan for renovation of the building. Rockford Construction provided a cost estimate for three “stages” of renovation: 1) elevator and accommodations at \$1,100,000; 2) sanctuary at \$475,000; 3) an addition to the west side entry at \$430,000. These estimates were provided to the congregation at a church-wide meeting in November 2015.

The Committee then engaged Horizons Stewardship to conduct a Feasibility Review for a Capital Campaign to assess the readiness of the congregation to financially support all or part of the renovation. The results of that review were presented to the congregation in March with these recommendations: 1) develop a comprehensive ministry of stewardship; 2) clarify the need for the project; 3) commit to intentional spiritual development and discipleship. The conclusion of the reviewer was that “conditions currently exist for a successful campaign to fund some of the renovations at a level of \$130,000 to \$165,000 (1.3 to 1.6 times 2015 giving).”

The Building Study Committee gathered again on April 4 to consider the Feasibility Review and next steps. We covet your prayers in this continuing process.

Missions and Ministries

Mission: United Methodist Summer Camps | The Missions Team project for the months of April and May will be United Methodist Summer Camps. Your missions contributions during the next two months will be used toward much-needed improvements or equipment at one or two designated summer camps. These funds are in addition to the 10 camp scholarships that we offer to youth in our church and community. The Missions Team appreciates your prayerful support to help others in the name of Christ.

Hillsdale County Crop Walk | The 2016 Hillsdale County Crop Walk will take place on Sunday, May 1. Registration begins at 1:30 pm at Trinity Lutheran Church on Griswold Street in Hillsdale. The walk will follow the Hillsdale Bike Path to Sandy Beach and back to Trinity Lutheran Church.

Twenty-five percent of funds raised by the Hillsdale County CROP Walk will be evenly distributed to the following local food banks: St. Anthony's, King's Kupboard, Litchfield UMC, The Salvation Army, and Lifeline.

There are many ways you can help support the Hillsdale County Crop Walk!

- 1) Walk in the CROP Walk and raise money to support worldwide efforts to fight hunger.
- 2) Sponsor someone who will be walking in the CROP Walk.
- 3) Help with Registration at Trinity Lutheran Church.
- 4) Staff a “rest break” along the CROP Walk route.
- 5) Drive your vehicle back and forth along the route in case someone needs help.
- 6) Help monitor the portion of the walk that can't be driven next to.



For pledge sheets, more information, or to help in any way, please contact Jim Bowen at 517-610-2461 or jbowen@hillsdale.edu.

Coming Events

SATURDAY, MAY 7 5:00-7:00 PM FREE COMMUNITY DINNER

For the love of God and neighbor

April 2016

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