

the
MESSENGER

March 2022

FROM THE
HEART OF

PASTOR AMANDA

“Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.”

James 4:8 NLT

The season of Lent begins on Wednesday, March 2 and while we don't have a fancy theme or focus, the purpose of Lent is always to draw near to God. In keeping with that movement of the church year, I thought that this verse from James would be an appropriate scripture for us to keep at the forefront of our minds and our spiritual practices from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday.

During these forty days of Lent, I invite each of us to consider how we might be more intentional in coming closer to God. Maybe it will be in choosing to fast from something so that you can be reminded to focus on God and spend extra time in prayer or extra

money in charitable giving. Perhaps that closeness will come from adding a special practice into your forty days. This might be a focus on artistic expression, finding beauty, encouraging others through a card or text or call, or anything that can help us connect more with our Creator.

These words from James encourage us to choose a practice that will increase our wholeness and our holiness. Loyalty to God is something precious and the more we try to be loyal to God “and” anything else, the less we are loyal to God.

I hope and pray that each of us is inspired or determined to come closer to God in this season of Lent.

Much love,
Pastor Amanda



ASH WEDNESDAY

MARCH 2
NOON

IN-PERSON & LIVESTREAMED



Our church is committed to ensuring that we provide safe places of worship and fellowship to everyone we serve. As part of that commitment, we strive to ensure thorough background checks and training for anyone in ministry with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

To this end, our church is moving from a paper system to an online service called Safe Gatherings. All churches in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference are already set up to be able to use Safe Gatherings.

Safe Gatherings is an online abuse prevention program that screens and educates staff and volunteers to help prevent abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in group settings. When employees and volunteers are trained to identify potential abusers, recognize the signs of abuse, and know how to handle reporting, they are better equipped to prevent abuse.

When using Safe Gatherings, upon successful completion of the application, background and reference checks, and the online training program, each applicant will receive documentation of approval valid for three years, and will have continued access to the online training program for an entire year.

The price per applicant for our individual church program available through the Safe Gatherings website is \$37. That includes processing of two electronic references, a national and county of residence 7-year background check, national and state of residence Sex Offender Registry check, and the 1 1/2 hour online abuse prevention and boundary awareness training.

If you would like more information about Safe Gatherings or our church's Safe Sanctuaries policy, please email jennifer@decaturfirstumc.org with any questions.

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference camping program is an extension of the local church's disciple-making process. Its mission is to *connect people, nature, and Christ for the transformation of the world.* Summer Camp Registration is now open for the 2022 season. Please visit <https://www.igrc.org/camping> to learn more and to register online.

Funds are available to partially offset the cost of IGRC camp fees. These funds are available for our church families attending any IGRC sponsored camp. Families may request funds for one camp per person per camping season (May – August). 1st UMC will pay (directly to IGRC Camping Ministries) 25% of the camp fee. There is a limit of \$400 per family per camping season. To request camping funds, please ask Jennifer for a *Campership Request Form*, which will need to be completed and submitted to our Financial Secretary, Nysa.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

We are looking for some extra help in the office for the next six weeks on Wednesdays and Fridays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. These volunteers would cover lunches and do a few simple office tasks. If you are interested, please call Krista at 217-423-9711 or send her an email at office@decaturfirstumc.org. Thank you!



UMW Fundraiser March 25

Please mark your calendars now for a carry-out fundraising dinner on March 25 to help the United Methodist Women raise funds to support state and local missions. The dinner will be catered by Nelson's Catering, and the cost is \$12 per ticket. The menu will feature ½ grilled chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, roll and butter, and a dessert. The meals can be picked up at the church from 4 – 6 pm, and you can just drive up to get your dinners. You may buy tickets from UMW members or order online with a credit card at this website:

<https://nelsonscatering.com/united-methodist-women>

Tickets will also be available in the office, but all tickets must be purchased by March 18. You won't want to miss this delicious meal – and who wants to cook on Friday, anyway?



On March 13, we will take a special collection for UMCOR (United Methodist Corps on Relief). As a United Methodist, you can be very proud of this organization that helps locally, nationally, and globally. In times of disaster, they are one of the first on the scene, partnering with local groups, to give assistance to where it is needed most. And yes, UMCOR, is on the scene in Texas. You may not know that because UMCOR is about helping people not making the news. UMCOR is not only there at the beginning but continues to help beyond the initial crisis.

We often think of them just as a disaster relief organization but they also combat world hunger, and seek to improve water and sanitation, global health, and creation care and sustainability.

“UMCOR comes alongside those who suffer from natural or human-caused disasters – be it famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events—to alleviate suffering and to be a source of help and hope for those left most vulnerable. They provide relief, response, and long-term recovery grants when these events overwhelm a community’s ability to recover on their own. UMCOR also provides technical support and training for partners to address emerging and on-going issues related to disaster relief, recovery, and long-term health and development.”

[\(https://umcmmission.org/5253-2/\)](https://umcmmission.org/5253-2/)

Please consider giving to this awesome arm of the United Methodist Church.

Thank You

Dear Friends,

The Finance committee has “closed the books” on 2021 and I would like to take this time to say **THANK YOU**. The levels of benevolence & generosity in our congregation are truly amazing!

We expected in-coming gifts & pledges to exceed our annual budget. However, the extent to which we surpassed that target was stunning. Through November of 2021, monthly giving (*pre-paid not withstanding*) averaged just under \$33,800.00. In December alone, pledges & gifts totaled \$70,182.92; as a result, we blew past our budget by \$72,200!

Other bright spots in this arena were...

- With the increase in gifts and the challenges in managing expenses, our year-end deficit was only \$20,250 (we had budgeted for \$116,655). As 2021 was the final year of the financial contingency plan adopted in 2018, we were able to close out the annual operating budget with a zero balance.

- The stewardship campaign last fall yielded a total of 94 financial commitments for FY2022. That is ten (10) more than we received the prior year! While overall averages may have dipped a bit, the key is the increased number of pledges. If we have a bigger pie, the size of the slices become irrelevant!

Once again, I can't thank you enough for all your patience, your generosity and your grace as the Finance team worked through the many challenges we faced over the past two years. It is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at duanemcc23@comcast.net or 217-433-8697.

God Bless,

Duane McCoskey
Chair, Finance Committee



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

PALM SUNDAY:

APRIL 10 9 am

MAUNDY THURSDAY:

APRIL 14 7 pm

GOOD FRIDAY:

APRIL 15 Noon

EASTER SUNDAY:

APRIL 17 8:30—9 am put flowers on the cross outside
9 am Worship Service



United Methodist Women

March 2022

All women are invited to participate in UMW. Women do not have to be a member of this or any church to participate.

Hope Circle will meet Friday, March 4, 9:30 a.m. in Susannah Wesley.

Blood Drive, Saturday, March 5, 7 – noon.
Rachel Miller, coordinator. Make reservation at Red Cross website. Great need for blood.

Miriam Circle will meet Monday, March 7, 9:30 a.m. in the church's library.

UMW Leadership Team will meet Wednesday, March 9, 1:30 p.m. in Susannah Wesley Room.

Spring Fling, Thursday, March 10, 1 p.m., Fellowship Hall. Program: Old King's Orchard Community Center Youth Programs.
Refreshments: Ruth Circle

Ruth Circle will meet Monday, March 21, 1:30 p.m. in the Chapel. Susan Hawbecker will present the program on the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Adam Hamilton, pastor, Leawood, Kansas.

Drive-through dinner, Friday, March 25, 4 – 6 p.m., UMW, First United Methodist Church, 201 W. North Street, Decatur. Food prepared by Nelson's Catering. Drive up to glass doors on North Street. Someone will deliver meal to your car!

Menu: 1/2 grilled chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, roll, butter, utensils; with brownies made by UMW! Tickets **\$12**. Order deadline is March 18. This is a major fundraiser for UMW, so please invite friends to buy tickets for this delicious food!

Save these dates:

Monday, May 2, Sangamon River District's Personal Growth Seminar presented by Pastor Amanda at Decatur First. 5:30 p.m. sandwich supper; 6 – 7 p.m., program.

Saturday, May 14, 10 a.m., Fellowship Hall, Celebration with mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers.

Refreshments – Hope Circle.



WORSHIP VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

	March 6	March 13	March 20	March 27
LITURGIST	Merle Morgan	Aaron Motter	Barb Cooper	Patty Barr
USHERS	Tom McQuiston & Thom Welsh	Tom McQuiston & Thom Welsh	Tom McQuiston & Thom Welsh	Tom McQuiston & Thom Welsh
ACOLYTES	Lexi Groves & Natalie Griffith	Ben Motter & Roman Griffith	Mason Richards & Aaron Harris	Colton Denny & Aaron Motter
GREETERS	Doris McKinley	Hohenstein Family	Newnam Family	Rich & Sandy Barnett
WELCOME CENTER	Anna Armstrong	Barb Bolin		Linda Reed
PRAY WITH PASTOR AMANDA	Chris Milligan	Tim Lee	Lana Hoey	Lexi Groves or Barb Bolin

NEXT BLOOD DRIVE AT First United Methodist Church...

The March blood drive will be held on Saturday, March 5 from 7 am to noon at Decatur FUMC. Please go online at redcrossblood.org or call Rachel Miller at 217-972-1987 to schedule an appointment to give blood...the best gift, besides Jesus, you can give.



Blood Drive!



On Thursday, March 10, the UMW will have its annual Spring Fling at 1 pm in the Fellowship Hall. The program will be presented by Old King's Orchard Community Center Youth Programs. Refreshments will be provided by Ruth Circle. All women are invited to attend!

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