



FIRST UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2024

phone: 651.439.1880

Hours: M-TH, 9AM-3PM

FRIDAY, 9AM-1PM

fumcstillwater@gmail.com

813 W. Myrtle Steet

Stillwater, MN 55082

Pastor's Pause February 2024

Love and repentance: When Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day

By Polly House

(*I enjoy sharing writings from other authors. Here is one by lay leader, Polly House, with the Mississippi UMC conference.)

“Dentist appointments, vacations, work, or worship — our calendars tell us when and what we have to do. They help us avoid conflicts.

But, what about when Ash Wednesday, the fasting-and-repentance start of Lent, and St. Valentine's Day, the celebration of romance and chocolates, show up on the same day, Feb. 14? How do we reconcile those on our church calendar?

A starting point comes from The Book of Worship as it addresses conflicts between celebrating a special day in the church year, such as Ash Wednesday or Easter, and a “special Sunday” approved by General Conference or special day

from the secular calendar. The Book of Worship is clear that the special day in the church year takes precedence although the other may also be observed.

Since some challenges can become opportunities, how can the faith community celebrate public repentance and reconciliation this year while the popular culture celebrates romantic love?

A LITTLE HISTORY

Stories of the origin of St. Valentine's Day frequently include accounts of the martyrdom of a priest named Valentinus or Valentine. Roman emperor Claudius II had nullified engagements and banned new marriages in order to increase the size of his army. Valentine defied the ban and continued marrying couples until he was discovered and killed on Feb. 14, 270 A.D.

Another priest, also named Valentine, was also martyred on Feb. 14, in a different year for helping imprisoned Christians. In some traditions, he may have healed his jailer's daughter before being martyred. In others, he and the jailer's daughter fell in love — before he was executed. In any case, the idea of risk and martyrdom for the sake of honorable love replaced a more ancient Roman festival with a new name, purpose and a feast day on the church calendar.

Centuries later, Chaucer and Shakespeare romanticized St. Valentine's Day. Sweethearts began exchanging love notes on Feb. 14, in medieval times.

Ash Wednesday, the official start of the 40 days of Lent (Sundays are not counted), falls on Feb. 14 this year. As they are marked with ashes — a traditional sign of repentance, mourning and mortality — during an Ash Wednesday service, many Christians start a time of intentional fasting and reflection. Abstaining from meals or favorite foods or giving up some particular pleasure during Lent has long served to remind people to mourn the pain they have caused God and to reflect and prepare for a transformed life.

GOD'S SACRIFICIAL LOVE

So how do worship planners address the conflict between the joy of St. Valentine's Day and the somberness of Ash Wednesday? Or do they?

“Rather than looking for a bridge or a compromise, Ash Wednesday for us may be better framed as a contrast,” said the Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources for Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church. “Some in the wider culture may be celebrating the wonder of sexual attraction and physical love and the feelings of immortality it often brings,” he added. “The church on this day observes the love of God, which calls us to self-denial, fasting and repentance in the face of our own denials of God's love in our lives and the reality of our mortality. If Valentine belongs in [an Ash Wednesday observance], it is precisely as a martyr.”

The Rev. Brian Cornell, pastor of Mount Vernon United Methodist Church, in Trinity, North Carolina, said, “A real act of love, as is mentioned in (1 Corinthians 12-13), is absolutely marked with the ashes of repentance, gratitude and sacrifice. Perhaps this is an opportunity to talk about true sacrificial love.” Another commenter sees “so much potential to connect with a world that is hurting. Folks need to know what real love looks like. I think that's in Christ!”

However you bring attention to Feb. 14 this year, remember that the sacrifice of Christ and the devotion of His people are examples of the greatest love of all. “

(<https://www.mississippi-umc.org/newsdetail/love-and-repentance-when-ash-wednesday-falls-on-valentine-s-day-10960083>)

PRAYER: Creator God, I want to thank you for the precious gift of love you have given to the world and to me. Thank you for blessing me every day with this love and the power and strength that I get from you every single day, especially this Ash Wednesday. Without your love I struggle to function because I NEED your love to sustain me. It's like food and medicine for my soul, dear Savior. Amen.
(Prayer by Pastor Jenny Lind Larsen)

WEDNESDAY DINNERS

Everyone is invited to eat supper at church each Wednesday evening at 5:30. **The first 3 Wednesdays of the month the meals are prepared and served by volunteers. The final Wednesday of the month - February 28 will be a POTLUCK, so bring a dish to share.**



WOMEN'S CIRCLE FYI...

Thinking of others in love will be the theme for February! Our circle will be preparing tie blankets for the Emma Norton Residence. Please come, **Thursday, February 8th at 10am**, to help cut and tie the blankets we have purchased with the money we have on account. Kathy Rundquist will be there with extra scissors and a willing smile as to how to do the project. We have 8 blankets to do so please come and give a helping hand.

FEBRUARY IS "ADOPT A CHILD" MONTH

Check out the back wall in the sanctuary for the names of all the children and youth who are a part of our church family. Choose one to seek out and recognize by



1. Praying for them.
2. Sending them a valentine.
3. Greeting them any time you see them.

To "adopt" a child, remove the heart from the wall and take it with you. You will find their address on the back side of the heart.

MUSIC NEWS AT FUMC!

The Worship Committee is in need of volunteers to usher at the 10:00 am service. Please contact a Worship Committee member if you'd like to help. Our February meeting will be held on 2.22.24 at 6:30 pm.

Rehearsals for Chancel Choir resumed at the regularly scheduled time of 7:00 pm on January 24 and continue throughout February and March. Open Circle resumed rehearsals on January 28 at 11:15 am. The River Town Ringers will resume rehearsals at 6:00 pm on March 6. Anyone interested in joining any of the performing groups please contact Leesa Levy, Kathy Hartman or Ruthann Ritchie. We are already planning special music for the Lenten and Easter seasons!

The Music team is pleased to welcome Ruthann Ritchie as organist for FUMC. As some of you know, Ruthann suffered a few broken ribs in early January, please continue your prayers for her "pain free" healing!

One last thing... another 5 drawer filing cabinet is needed for the choral music library. If you have one, please contact the church office. Thank you. Leesa Levy, Director of Music



FINANCE SUMMARY

The 2023 year-end Finance Report shows that all funds are OK and Apportionments have been paid in full. In addition, \$3,372 was forwarded to UMCOR for special donations. We have a current total bank balance of \$43,013.80 in all funds.

We ended the 2023 year with a General Fund deficit of \$22,846.15. This was balanced by a transfer from the Legacy Fund. We have been paying ahead on the parking lot loan, with a remaining balance of \$19,410.

We have received 51 pledges for the 2024 fiscal year in the amount of \$151,446 for the General Fund and 27 pledges of \$15,780 for the Capital Fund. This against a 2024 budget of \$257,602. If you haven't sent in your pledge, you may do so at any time. Pledge forms are available from the office.

ACT OF KINDNESS AND THOUGHTFULNESS AWARD Announcing our February Winner...

SANDY GARVIN



Sandy Garvin is the recipient of our "Acts of Kindness and Thoughtfulness Award" for the month of February. She has made several donations that reflect her immense talent at quilting. Two years ago she made quilts for the front of the new Welcome Table and the Coffee Table, reflecting what the tables represent. They give a warmth and beauty as you walk into the Gathering Space. This past fall Sandy donated another example of her quilting expertise. This time it is a very large quilt that is hanging on the wall across from the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. It is a reflection of the messages that our church wishes to communicate epitomizing "Wrapping All People in God's Love. The wording says

"In the hope that one day we will embrace our sameness, accept our differences, and live together in peace".

Sandy is from Ohio originally and moved to Alaska with her husband and children years ago. After her children were grown, they moved to Stillwater and Nebraska. Sadly, Sandy's husband had passed way and she wanted to be near her family. As a result, she moved here a number of years ago to be close to one family and in much closer proximity to the other. She is very active in her children's and grandchildren's lives, going to sporting events faithfully, being present with them, and babysitting often, both in Stillwater and Nebraska. Sandy is a valued member of our Finance Committee helping the team ensure our finances are in order.

We are grateful to Sandy for her generosity in adding the beauty of three quilting projects to our Gathering Space. Thank you Sandy for the time, energy, expertise, and creativity you invested to beautify this space.

BRIDGE GROUP

The Bridge Group will meet February 2 at noon in the Fellowship Hall. Beginners are welcome! Contact the church office at fumcstillwater@gmail.com to join the Bridge Group mailing list.



JANUARY AD COUNCIL SUMMARY

Reconciling Committee – Recommended holding a Church Conference to vote on adoption of the Reconciling Congregation Statement. Subsequently the date for the Conference was set for April 21 following worship.

Finance Committee – Reported a General Fund shortfall of \$22,846 for 2023. The Board authorized a transfer from the church's Legacy Fund to offset this deficit. Jesse Hartley will serve as Finance Chair for 2024 and Jim Nelson will be Treasurer.

Membership Roll – The Ad Council Chair, Caring Ministries Chair, Treasurer, and Church Historian have reviewed the membership roll for the purpose of producing an up-to-date and accurate list. The updated list will be used to start the formal updating process at the Church Conference.

Lenten Study – The book “Multiplying Love” will be the subject of a Lenten study. The study schedule will be posted on the website homepage <https://fumcstillwater.com/>.

Christmas Eve Worship – The Lay led Christmas Eve service was well received. The Ad Council supports always conducting a Christmas Eve service, such that FIRST UNITED always presents a worship option for the community.

Ad Council – The regular meeting date is changed from 3rd Tuesday to 3rd Thursday. The next Ad Council meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2024.

SCRIP IS AVAILABLE!

The Scrip Order Schedule is now posted on the church website homepage under Announcements. The next order is scheduled for February 4. Orders can be placed after Sunday worship services, Wednesday dinners, or anytime by email to the church office at fumcstillwater@gmail.com. Order blanks are available at the church Information Center. Payment for email orders can be dropped off at the church during office hours.



YOUTH MINISTRIES

The Youth Council supported our youth for a trip to see “A Christmas Carol” in December. It was a fun night at the Guthrie Theater. We have plans to make and mail cookies to our college friends. Then, perhaps a sledding party if the weather cooperates. Time and date to be determined. The Youth Council welcomes any new folks that would like to come and be part of this ministry and also welcomes new ideas for service or fun projects.



FEBRUARY HISTORY MOMENT BY PATSY

Twenty years ago “A beautiful new Rodgers 837 organ was given by generous anonymous donors. It was installed on February 4 and 5.” This quote is from the 2004 Annual Report. It was also noted that the organ was used the very next day, February 6 for a funeral service. The old Rodgers 145 organ found a new home at Sunrise UMC in Mounds View, MN.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Our Branding Team is on the move again! We are planning to purchase a new table for the Narthex that will match the two high tops already there. It will really tie the room together!

The table and chairs will be funded by donations with the target amount of \$800. Please support this worthy initiative - indicate on your check "Narthex Table".

Sincerely,

Nancy Nelson SPRC Co-Chair

LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

- PLEASE mark your calendars.
Wednesday, February 14, Ash Wednesday service, 6:30pm following 5:30pm meal.
- March 24, Palm Sunday, 10am (worship here).
- Thursday, March 28, Maundy Thursday, 5:30pm soup supper with communion, brief service to follow in sanctuary at 6:30pm.
- Friday, March 29, Good Friday noon meditative service.
- **Sunday, March 31, 7am sunrise service, 10am traditional service.**



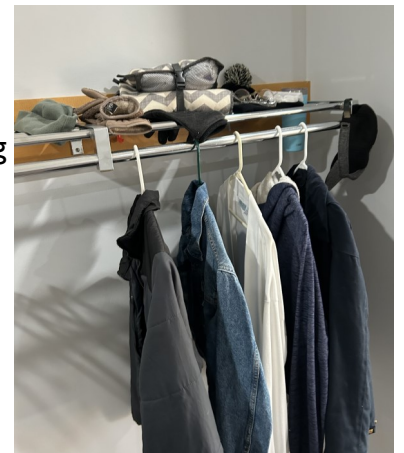
FEBRUARY

**Feb. 3 Samantha Hauser, Laura Mayaka;
Feb. 4 Frankie Reyna; Feb. 6 Erik Eitzman;
Feb. 8 Janet Morgen; Feb. 11 Jasmine Zenner;
Feb. 15 Virginia Miller, Feb. 17 Christina Leines;
Feb. 18 Renita Deaton, Dorene Hauser, Rachel Reyna, Linden Terwilliger;
Feb. 20 Sylvia Dalzell, Feb. 29 Lucy Rustin**

LOST AND FOUND

Please check the coat rack for items which you may have left behind at church. There are jackets, gloves, mittens, hats/caps, readers and even a diaper changing pouch.

Thanks in advance for checking it out.



RECONCILING COMMITTEE

The Reconciling Committee brought our recommendation to the FIRST UNITED Administrative Council in January. The recommendation was to have the vote to adopt the Reconciling Statement at a Church Conference in April, presided over by the District Superintendent. The Ad Council approved this recommendation. The Church Conference date has been set for Sunday, April 21, after church. Only church members, present on that day, will be able to vote.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact a member of the Reconciling Committee: Cynthia Frederick, Patsy Bellman, Sharry Swann, Lizzie Bellman, Mike Ptacek and Pastor Jenny Lind Larsen.

The statement can be found on the website and will be posted in the April Newsletter.

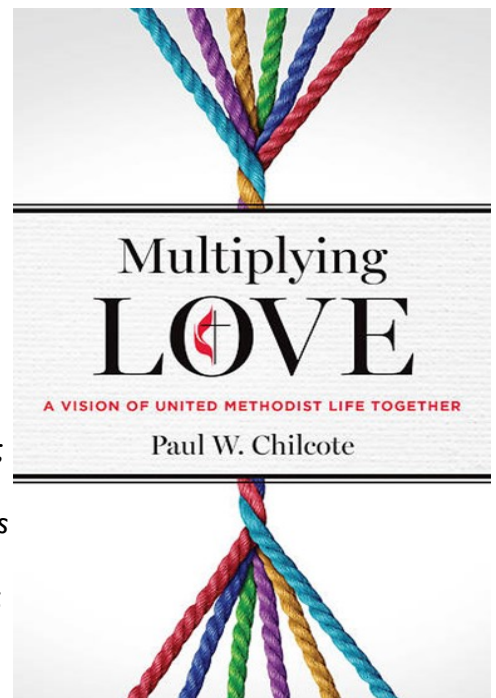


2024 LENTEN STUDY

It's hard to believe that Lent is so close at hand, but February 14 is Ash Wednesday this year with Easter landing on March 31. Therefore, we will be continuing our Adult Study Forum beginning Sunday, Feb. 11 following worship. Books are available in the office now.

A 15\$ donation is suggested.

"Our world needs love during these desperate days of radical polarization and division. Our United Methodist churches yearn to embrace love more completely because God first loved us. Our "faith" (including doctrine) is important; Christian "hope" (including renewal) is important; "love" of God and neighbor is more important. Multiplying Love underscores what matters most and stands in contrast to divisive misreading of essential Methodist teachings. Dr. Chilcote helps us embrace anew the Wesleyan vision of love of Jesus as central to what we believe and how we live."



UNITED METHODIST MEN (UMM)



Join the United Methodist Men for a monthly devotion, breakfast, discussion, and fellowship. The meeting on February 10 will be at the Lowell Inn at 8 a.m. Contact the church office at fumcstillwater@gmail.com to join the UMM mailing list.