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# THE GOOD NEWS

April 2024

PASTOR KORD

Dear Friends,

We are exiting one of the most sacred times of the year, because we just finished up with Holy Week and Lent. And it was time to reflect on the events of that week as it pertains to Jesus and his sacrifice. What does this mean for us as believers and as disciples?



The Holy Week started off with Jesus entering into Jerusalem on Sunday, and throughout the rest of the week, he would be crucified, he would die, and then he would rise again with all power.

As we leave this sacred time, we should be thinking to ourselves, "how should we live out Jesus' example from this week?" Remember, Jesus was the ultimate example of what it was to embody God's mission on earth. That is our righteous call as well.

Remember that while we were yet sinners, Christ died on the cross for us. It is because of this sacrifice that we now have the victory in salvation. And as Christ gave us the victory, he stayed on earth after his death for a period of time in order to commission his apostles. In order to be effective in the world today, we need to reflect on how God is Commissioning us now. We should be thinking about the ministry of our church and the ministry of presence that we hold in our community's places of work, in places that we frequent daily or weekly. There are many people that are in need of this same victory that Christ gave us. They only need to believe. What are we doing to foster this belief and others?

This should be our foundation and focus for the rest of the year.  
Blessings!

*Congratulations  
on your little  
princess! ♥*



*Hazel Mae Ballard*

*March 20, 2024*

*7.05 lbs.*

*20 inches long*

*Parents—Austin & Mackenzie*

*Grandparents—Erich & Dawn*

*Great Grandmother—Sue*

Elf on a shelf? Psh.  
What Jesus wants is ewe in a pew!



KIM



Thank you to the congregation who donated into the free-will donations for a 'Pre Rummage Sale-Sale'. We received \$53. Then during the week, we had a few restaurants and bakeries come in and we made \$290. We will continue to sell the various kitchen items such as large electric coffee pots, serving bowls & platters, coffee & tea servers, cold drink pitchers, bread pans, various trays and creamer/sugar containers, etc.

Have you started your Spring Cleaning? We would love to have your gently used treasures for the Rummage Sale! Housewares, clothes, home goods, decorations, tools, books, etc. The Rummage Rooms are starting to fill up! Only 5 months to go until the big weekend. Save the dates of September 20 & 21!

SUE

Many thanks to those hardy souls who showed up for a major kitchen purge. A GREAT BIG thanks to the Carr/Hoover family for cleaning the sump pump room. If you have need for any of the items that have been saved, they are downstairs under the sanctuary and/or in the large dining room. There are prices on some of the larger items. This is a project that has needed to be done for years and now we have begun.



We held our monthly meeting on March 12. April was packed with services either here or at First United Methodist Church on Chicago Road. We first started with Ash Wednesday, which was a very nice service. We had Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday Services here, which the First United Methodist Church was invited to, as we were invited to their church for Good Friday Service and, of course, Easter was here. The lobby renovation is moving along. The paint and flooring have been picked and the flooring should be going in soon. The group has been looking for new furniture. We were able to list the old furniture and the old wooden desk on Facebook Marketplace and did make a small amount of money for the items. The flat roof had some maintenance done to make sure all flashing and the rubber cover is all sealed and cleaned up. We hired a company to install a new camera and fix the iPad. The new camera will enable us to live stream the service over Facebook. Hopefully, the sound will be much better on both the new camera and iPad because both will be connected directed to the sound system. Pastor Kord is still working on plans of some future visioning for the church. Where do we see ourselves in 3, 5 and/or 10 years from now? We will be looking at gathering a Visioning Team to work with Rev. Kord on the future of St. Paul. If you are interested in that team, please see anybody on Consistory. We started Passing of the Peace during service which is a nice thing to bring back. Please understand that COVID is still around as is the flu and there are some people that still do not feel comfortable with a physical greeting. We ask that a simple nod and greet for now and that the greeting is from your pew. We do not want people getting up and moving throughout the Sanctuary. I am sure everybody enjoyed the service where Josh was assistant liturgist. He did a great job. Maybe as the kids get older, more of the kids might feel comfortable doing the same. In May, Women's Overall will be open to all and will have special speakers attending with some very good information. They will go in the detail on what they have planned. The Church also has been going through the whole building doing a massive cleaning project of old items we no longer are using or even work or are broken. A reminder that we have confirmed that on December 15<sup>th</sup>, Conference Minister, Rev. Lillian Daniel will be our guest minister. Please remember, if there is anything that needs attention (building, service, etc.), please let a member of Consistory know, so we can address it at our meeting or sooner.



The Lobby Refresh Committee continues its work. We anticipate that the new flooring will be laid and the painting will be done sometime this month. We are working with the contractor to schedule the work now. The committee members have been actively shopping for the new lobby furniture. It has been challenging to find reasonably priced furniture that is both durable and attractive. The old furniture was successfully sold on Marketplace and recently picked up. If you have any ideas concerning sources of durable furniture, please contact Gail Popyk or Maria Momeyer.



Dear Members of St. Paul UCC,

I write to you from a true place of freedom! I have now been in the free world for more than a year and in just a year, I have experienced so many amazing moments! It is so easy for me to find gratefulness in my every day and celebrate every small victory that comes my way.



Now it has not felt like a year has gone by at all! There has been so much I've looked forward to doing and the days have just floated by! Every adjustment I've made has been pretty seamless with the love and support around me. The blessings and success I knew I'd have, have truly come my way and I am thrilled to write to you and let you know you have been a wonderful part of who I am today.

The biggest miracle has been my wife. Getting married was the pinnacle of my freedom and my life. She has been a Godsend and has been here for every step of my transition to freedom!

I've secured a meaningful job that I genuinely love working the night shift as a Service Technician. That takes up a lot of my time, but it is a great job.

There have been countless other experiences that have brought me joy and I am just so thankful to be writing you from this position.

God bless you all and thank you for the many years of support! It truly got me through some very difficult times!

*Happy Anniversary*  
*Austin & Mackenzie Ballard*  
*April 17*





It's finally spring, and our thoughts quite naturally turn to the garden, so it's a propitious time to see what scripture has to say on that subject. You might not expect there to be much in a religious text on this subject, but there is a surprising wealth of commentary. The ancient Israelites were an agricultural people, and crops and gardens were very much on their minds.

It started, naturally with the beginning of humankind. After all, we started in a garden, the most perfect one ever planted. Eden was literally a paradise created for us, containing every variety of tree, growing on its own without assistance or work. We could avail ourselves of the harvest of every type of fruit tree, except one. We were forbidden to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When we disobeyed this prohibition, we reaped punishment. Our punishment was *not* exile from the Garden (a common misconception). Eve's punishment was that she would bear her children in pain and travail and would always be subject to her husband (take that, ladies!). Adam's punishment was that he would have to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow and would return to dust at death. Exile from the Garden was so they did not eat from the Tree of Life and become immortal like God. We've been trying to get back to the Garden ever since.

And God has tried to accommodate us. In Isaiah, God promises, "The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail." (Isaiah 58:11 NRSV). It is God's guarantee to the Israelites that the righteous will find life like a garden: "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream." (Jeremiah 17:7-8 NRSV). Further, these trees bear important fruit, according to Jesus: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit...The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:43-45, abridged, NRSV).

Jesus used these metaphors of agriculture often because his audience would relate to them. Although all sorts of professions - from fisher folk to tax collectors to religious officials - were represented in his audience, ancient Israel was at base an agricultural society. As such, he compared the evangelizing efforts of his followers to the harvest. In both Matthew and Luke, he says that the "harvest is plentiful, but the workers (laborers) are few," (Matthew 9:37 and Luke 10:2 NRSV), so he asks his followers to ask God to send more workers for the harvest, a prayer we echo today as we look around a half-filled sanctuary. The reality is we have to recruit the workers ourselves.

And what did the ancient Israelites expect from their God? No less than a return to Eden. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with singing." (Isaiah 35:1-2a NRSV). Like their cousins the Arabs, the Israelites pictured paradise as a well-watered garden. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted." (Isaiah 12:3-4 NRSV). If you've noticed that a lot of the scriptures cited here are from Isaiah, that is natural, for he often used the imagery of the field in his prophecies.

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Indeed, one of the most joyful images of agricultures comes from Isaiah. "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace... (Isaiah 55:10-12a NRSV).

As far as the ultimate wisdom concerning our garden, it comes (of course) from Ecclesiastes, which tells us: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted..."(Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 NRSV). It is significant that the activities of the garden come second only to birth and death; all else is listed later. Clearly, God places a premium on our gardening activities. We still look to recapture Eden.



- ♥ Trudy & Joy for putting together the Spring Raffle
- ♥ Beth for decorating the Lenten table
- ♥ Kim/Jim/Bill for cleaning the storage rooms
- ♥ Circle 1 for hosting March's coffee hour
- ♥ Choir members for sharing their lovely voices



- 3 Mary Fritz
- 10 Amelia Gebert  
Joshua Gebert
- 11 Darcy Sufnar
- 13 Gail Popyk
- 28 Dayton Regier

JOY

Happy Spring Everyone!! It is always my pleasure to run the Spring Raffle for Women's Fellowship, but many donations and support always makes this a nice start to the new season. My friend donated, as she has for the last 3 years, 2 Easter baskets from Alinosi Chocolates and they were beautiful as usual! I always mix up themes for the remaining 6 baskets. This year the choices were: Panera gift card, Michigan Lotto, AMC, Bath & Body Works, Wine/Cheese/Sausage, Make-up/brushes & goodies! Good luck to all who purchased tickets!

Thank you to all who came to buy raffle tickets during coffee hour/pre-rummage sale and all around the services.

Congratulations to our winners: Trudy, Bill, Amelia, Dawn, Lorri, Gail, Hannah, and Darcy.

## 2 ALINOSI CHOCOLATE

## WINE/SAUSAGE/CHEESE



## BATH &amp; BODY WORKS



MAKE-UP &amp; ACCESSORIES



AMC THEATRE



PANERA BREAD



MI LOTTO