

Our Light

www.middleburyumc.org
MARCH 2014

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

The MIDDLEBURY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Newsletter

Whether you are a member of the Middlebury congregation, a local resident, or a visitor to our area, you are invited and welcome to attend and participate in all activities and events mentioned in this newsletter.

FROM LAURIE AND GUS, INTERIM COORDINATING PASTORS

Almost exactly a year ago we were confronted with the realization that the way we defined ourselves as a church was outdated and failing. Using every relevant measure we were an institution in decline. Membership, worship attendance, finances, all in a kind of free fall. We knew that if we held to the status quo, we were not going to make it.

And so, step by step, we have begun to abandon old categories that used to define what it means to be a church. Even the word "church" may not be adequate to what is happening to us. Step by step we are letting go of twentieth century notions of what a church is and does. Whatever those images are for you, let them go, because God's is moving in our midst, challenging customs and expectations.

The first thing you did (for better or worse) was to let me and Laurie step in as volunteer coordinating pastors. Do you know that there is no such thing in the United Methodist Church? Together, we made that up. You may not realize it, but every week we are subverting the very notion of a twentieth century paid, professional, pastoral ministry. Nothing in the recent history of Methodism, at least in America, prepares us for this. This is just all new.

Next you did away with the formal committees and structures outlined by the Methodist rule books. We just made up new ways to organize ourselves. The Bishop looked over at what we are doing and said, well ... go for it. See what you can accomplish as the people of God.

And so we are. But we are not and cannot be done.

In the days and weeks ahead your coordinating committee will present new ways to bring ministry into our neighborhood. For example, imagine a small group of recent college graduates, from across the region, living in our parsonage, funded by us to bring new kinds of worship and ministry to our neighborhood. Is that possible? We don't know. How would it work? We don't know. But then a year ago we did not know how any of this was going to work, and yet here we are.

On March 2nd we will get together as a whole church to talk together about these kinds of ideas for our future. Exciting ideas, because God is not done with us yet. The Holy Spirit reminds us over and over that we are not here to preserve an institutional heritage, or to maintain institutional inertia. We are of course grateful for the faithfulness of all those who have gone before us and who worked faithfully in their day. However, we are not here to do exactly what they did just because it worked then, or because others expect us to do it now.

What we are here to do is to join together as the Body of Christ. We are here to figure out what that means now in our little community. We are here to proclaim without embarrassment that the kingdom of God is at work here. That God is real, that the needs of the world (right here) are great and that we have something to do and say about that.

Come and join us.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Please remember those who are grieving in your prayers:

The family of Barb Bushey
The family of Simone Malzac

Please remember those who have health issues or life challenges in your prayers:

Chris, Tom Colley's Dad, Gerry DeWitt & son, Norma Duclos, Roda Dragon, the Leggett family, Phyllis Macaulay, Marcia's Mom, the Masterson-Glen family and James, Pauline Obrien, Kevin Parizo, Carolyn Perine, Jason Saltman, Sue Taylor, Connie Waltrip, Marg Wesley's sister, Mary Wimett.

MARCH CALENDAR

MARCH 2 - The first quarter "**All Church Meeting**" is scheduled for **Sunday, March 2** immediately following the regular service. Agenda items will include a financial update, proposals for pastoral / ministerial leadership and Trustee appointments among other things. Lunch will be provided.

MARCH 8 – UMM Breakfast 8AM, Middlebury UMC

MARCH 8 – Coral Concert – 7PM, Burlington

MARCH 10 – Resources Team meeting 3:30PM Julie Coons' office

MARCH 17 – UMW Meeting 2PM Mimi's house

MARCH 30 – Chicken & Biscuit Supper 5-6:30PM Middlebury UMC

SEMINARY SINGERS CONCERT

Boston University School of Theology will present a concert at the First United Methodist Church in Burlington on March 8th at 7:00PM. The singers are students from our Methodist seminary in Boston. This group of thirty-five singers is made up of students studying at our Methodist seminary in Boston. The group is touring Vermont to visit and sing at various churches. Both Jill Colley Robinson and Lee Adkins were

participants in this choir when they were students at Boston University. Sharing transportation for those who either want to drive or ride can be arranged by calling Lee at 989-7410. This inspirational evening provides both a time of good music and a chance to meet some of those people preparing for the ministry our church.

UMW NEWS

There were only six attending our February meeting due to illness and people traveling. However, we caught up on each other's news and concerns. We set the dates for the Spring rummage sale for Friday May 16th from 9-5 with a bake sale upstairs in the kitchen from 9-1. On Saturday the 17th it will be bag day from 9-noon. It was suggested that we raise the bag cost from \$2 to \$2.50. Since there were so few present we will vote on this at our next meeting.

Beginning on Sunday, March 2nd, we will be having a special collection during our Celebrations Time for Nothing But Nets gathering money for malaria nets in Africa. This will be done each Sunday during basketball's March Madness Road to the Final 4. Our next meeting will be Monday, March 17th at 2:00 pm at Mimi's.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

The usual meeting of members and friends of both this church and East Middlebury Church will be a 8:00AM on Saturday, March 8th. One of the best breakfasts in Middlebury that morning is provided and the fellowship is both fun and inspirational. No reservations are needed.

FROM JOHN WESLEY'S COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

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