

THE PORTLIGHT

A newsletter for members and friends of Portland Avenue United Methodist Church



All you who wait for the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage. (Psalm 31:24)

April 2020

Our Mission

"To grow followers of Jesus who change the world."

Our Vision

"To be a safe harbor along life's journey."

The **PORT**
A safe harbor along life's journey.

I am a night owl. I was born after 9:00 pm, and it seems to just be the way I am wired. I can function fine and rise in the very early morning (when I am compelled to), but something awakens in my spirit later at night more so than at the crack of dawn.

Consequently, I have an affinity for the darkness. I appreciate it and the way it brings me to focus. And I don't mind the solitude that often comes in the dark.

But these days of darkness and isolation brought on by a global pandemic don't feel the same way as the darkness I find comfortable. For some of us, this time is among the most disorienting of days that we have ever encountered. I recall a similar sense of disorientation from September 11, 2001, and the days that followed; and before that, I remember feeling it when the Gulf War started and news tickers began rolling across the bottom of the TV screen with daily statistics. Perhaps there is some semblance of this for those who recall the days of the Great Depression, or the beginnings of any of the other wars that erupted between then and now, but I imagine some differences in that, too.

I turned this week to one of my favorite contemporary authors for some wisdom. Joan Chittister, a Benedictine sister, and Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, collaborated to write *Uncommon Gratitude: Alleluia for All That Is*. The Archbishop maintains that "no matter what, the proper stance of the Christian in the world is one of gratitude." The introduction to the book acknowledges that we naturally feel grateful for some things, like God, peace, wealth, life, faith, and unity.

But when these are set alongside other things we would never think to sing alleluia about, such as death, divisions, sufferings, and sinners, we begin to see truth in Chittister's reflection that "Life itself is an exercise in learning to sing 'alleluia' here in order to recognize the face of God hidden in the recesses of time. To deal with the meaning of 'alleluia' in life means to deal with moments that do not feel like 'alleluia moments' at all."

"Darkness" they write, "is that period of life when nothing seems to be going as we expected. We find ourselves derailed in our journey to our dreams, not only by things we didn't foresee but by things we simply could not have imagined...Darkness consumes and envelops us."

This book was written some ten years ago, so it's remarkable just how much these words resonate in our day.

Yet I knew that this book would help shape my perspective in the places where I'm struggling and disoriented. Almost every single thing I do in my job is now done differently. I thought I engaged enough with technology to get along before this, but now almost everything needs to be distributed on a different platform than before...actually on multiple platforms (written, online, streamed, and NOT in-person). As you might have noticed, most of our ministries rely on the ability to meet face to face, so there's hardly anything more disorienting and disruptive than social distancing! You know, as they say, though, that every challenge is an opportunity. And that's the perspective Chittister and Williams offer in their chapter about darkness.

"The value of a dark time is that it insists that we become new, even to ourselves," they write. "Darkness is a time of beginning again. We are forced then to determine a new way to be in the world. It is a frightening time-but a liberating time as well."

They continue with this framework, reminding us that darkness is also a very spiritual time. And in it, we have a choice: to go on as is; or to go on differently.

And we can all see the truth in this. It is true when we go through the darkness of a serious illness, death, loss of a job, end of a relationship, and yes, even this pandemic. It is also true for us individually, congregationally, and collectively. We can go on disoriented; or go on differently - with wisdom, hope, and resolve.

The good news is that we worship a triune God who is the absolute best at Creating, Redeeming and Sustaining. It is our privilege to represent God's efforts in these matters for the here and now. We just need to make sure amid this darkness that we don't lose sight of the One who will see us through.

*"You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life."
(Lamentations 3:57-58)*

Pastor Carol



Sunday School News

Bible Story Sheets and Activity Sheets were mailed to all households who have been participating in Sunday School this year.

This will enable our children to continue to learn from these materials while in-person Sunday School is suspended.

Youth Group News

April 5 - 11:00 am to 12:00 pm Confirmation via Google Hangouts Meet. Watch email for details.

April 5 - 6:00 pm Youth Group check-in via Google Hangouts Meet. Watch email for details.

April 19 - 6:00 pm Youth Group check-in via Google Hangouts Meet. Watch email for details.

Current Congregational and Denominational News

Activities Suspended

You'll notice that the usual Sunday morning volunteer calendar is absent from this edition of the Portlight. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have suspended all in-person activities, including Sunday School, Coffee Fellowship, and Worship on Sunday mornings. This is a faithful response we made effective March 13 to do our part in slowing the spread of this virus and to keep folks as safe as possible; even though it brings great sorrow.

We continue to monitor information shared by our elected officials and experts on the matter. At this point, our Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough has asked that all our United Methodist congregations suspend in-person worship until at least May 10. You may read or watch his message here: <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/blogdetail/easter-cannot-be-canceled-13537135>

Updates regarding the suspension of our activities and communication about when we will resume in-person activities again will be shared via Congregational Letter distributed by mail and email while being cross-posted to our website (<http://www.paumc.org/>) and our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/>); so please be watching for news from church and take the time to read it so that you will be well-informed.

N95 Masks Sought

LaVonne Robinson's granddaughter, Amy, is a doctor in Providence, RI. Her hospital system is short on N95 masks. It's a long shot, but if any of you have access to any of these, please consider donating to LaVonne so that she can send to Dr. Amy.

Worship News

Since Sunday, March 15, Pastor Carol has prepared a weekly worship guide containing prayers, a scripture reading, a brief message, and either a few verses of a hymn written out (for worship guides mailed to those who aren't online) or links of special music videos to watch for those who are online. These guides have also been uploaded to our blog page at <https://paumc.org/blog/>, so take a look at any you may have missed or that are yet to come.

New PAUMC YouTube Channel

We have a new YouTube Channel for The PORT! YouTube will give us a better url address once we get 100 subscribers, so please log on to YouTube (create a free account if you don't already have one) and click on "subscribe" once you get to our channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8VTgOhg7PNDgwjLArbXnIA>

We anticipate worship will be available via video online starting Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020, at 10:00 am on our YouTube channel, with a possible link on Facebook. Please be patient as we attempt to worship online in this way. But also be excited to give this a try!

2020 General Conference Postponed

General Conference scheduled May 5-15, 2020, has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will likely be rescheduled for 2021, again in Minneapolis, so more news to come regarding the impact of this delay on efforts to live into an inclusive vision here in Minnesota.

Congregational Care

We celebrate YOU during APRIL

If you have a birthday during the month of April but your name isn't on our list, PLEASE LET US KNOW, so we can update our records for next year..

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 04 - Martin Thames | 18 - Mike Cameron |
| 06 - Jeff Chamberlain | - Bob Haugen |
| - Pam Rose | 20 - Kasey Swenson |
| 08 - Scott Cameron | - Tara Thompson |
| 15 - Jarek Haugen | 24 - Nora Peine |
| 16 - Katelyn Hagerty | 26 - Pat Ekstrom |



Address Update

Joyce Faircloth (new phone #)
(952) 698-3860

Children, Youth & Family Ministries Garage Sale Postponed

This annual event, originally scheduled for April 24 and 25, is postponed due to social distancing protocols related to COVID-19. We intend to re-schedule for sometime this summer, so please continue to gather your donations, and store them securely at your place until we're ready to receive them here at church.



Puzzle!

Find and circle these words associated with the Lenten journey to the cross.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|---------|--------|
| colt | denial | kiss | repent |
| confess | donkey | lots | silver |
| cross | forsaken | palms | sins |
| crown | Gethsemane | penance | suffer |
| crucifixion | Golgotha | Pilate | thorns |
| death | hosanna | prayer | vigil |

E N A M E S H T E G R L W Y
 C L E U X B M T H B U C W B
 N R I K Y P A T E T I Y X Y
 A V J G A L B R E Y A R P B
 N G N L I S N L A I N E D X
 E W M P R V R D H B N R D F
 P S O G O L G O T H A B S C
 D L N R O C O N F E S S I K
 O T H T C P E K W U O U N D
 M N S H N P W E D R H F S K
 U N F O E T K Y C S G F O E
 H E C R E V L I S W Q E C M
 H V H N C X S O C C J R L O
 F Q E S U D S H C A A Y M C
 C R U C I F I X I O N S R V

Intergenerational Mission Trip

Imagine the life-changing experience of serving together in mission with others across the generations! We have this opportunity during a mission trip to Spirit Lake Reservation in North Dakota from August 9-14 (the van from The PORT will be leaving on August 10 due to some youth family vacations).

This is an intergenerational opportunity where individuals of all ages can sign up. Children or youth may want to come with parents and/or grandparents. This is true! Last year, participants ranged from age 8 to 85.

The cost is \$200 per person, and you should indicate your interest/commitment to Pastor Carol by Sunday, April 26, so that we can get our reservations made by the deadline. More information is available here: <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/eventdetail/12573415>

Here's an article after last year's trip if you'd like to read more, written by Lyndy Zabel, Director of Missional Impact for the Minnesota Annual Conference:



Twelve years ago, Mike Flowers stood on a hill near Sheyenne, North Dakota on the Spirit Lake Reservation, envisioning a scene where children and youth would play together down below. Trudging through four feet of snow might have slowed him down a bit that day, but it did not dampen his call and desire to make his dream come alive.

Today, Flowers—a licensed local pastor—is the director of the Spirit Lake Ministry Center, which supports

people on the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation and welcomed 31 Minnesota United Methodist volunteers in early July. Ranging in age from 8 to 85 and coming from six different churches in our conference, we scraped and painted, made bunk beds, and did a little landscaping. Teams from Texas and Illinois were there, too, building decks and ramps on homes on the reservation. We also learned about the local culture, including Dakota stories, drumming, dancing, and crafts. And we shared stories of Jesus at Vacation Bible School.

“I went there to meet people from cultures other than my own and figure how we can accomplish things together,” said John Wolforth, a member of Walker UMC in Minneapolis. The multiple generations, the different teams from around the country, and the interactions we had with people on the rez were a good blend of that.”

The Minnesota team got to know Flowers, and his wife Libby Flowers, and hear about their ministry in addition to completing hands-on volunteer tasks. For nine months out of the year, he preaches, teaches, makes hospital visits, puts together children's and youth programs, along with other pastoral duties, while also making sure the roads are plowed and the heat is on in his multi-purpose building. Each summer, he oversees about 400 volunteers who come from around the country to work on projects with the people who live in the surrounding area. “With” is a very important word to Flowers. To him, it means mutual understanding, respect, and partnership.



Before the Flowerses started any programs, they spent two years visiting families, schools, parks, playgrounds, and tribal centers just to get to know people and build relationships. Mike Flowers became the first non-Native American to sign up for The United Methodist Church's Native American Course of Study to become a pastor.

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Mission Outreach

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The mutual understanding and trust created through these experiences are in play every summer. Tribal leaders pick light construction projects that need to be accomplished, and they pay for the materials. Then Flowers arranges for teams of volunteers to complete them. It's truly a 50-50 partnership. And because of it, over the years, hundreds of homeowners have been helped.

Flowers is not one to point out his accomplishments and tout how he helped improve the lives of many in the area. He's just trying to be faithful and follow his call. And it seems to me that a new ramp or repaired roof might be the least of it.

All of the Minnesotans who went on the trip this summer are eager to go back. We are already planning another trip to Spirit Lake for next July, hoping to take twice as many people as participated this year.

The day before our team left, the two of us walked up to the burial mounds at Spirit Lake. On the way back, we stopped on the hill where Flowers stood when his thriving ministry existed only in his imagination. We looked down. We saw about 30 youth—Black, White, Hispanic, and Dakota—playing basketball and having fun together.

A beautiful sight to behold: mutual respect, understanding, and taking time to enjoy each other's company healing a broken world before our very eyes.

Thanks be to God!



Cornerstone Shelter Dinner Recap

The Mission Outreach Team served dinner consisting of tater tot hotdish, green beans, fresh fruit, dessert and beverages to 60 residents at Cornerstone Shelter in Bloomington on March 10. Larry Stalberger, who helped coordinate the effort, said, "It was a great event. Thanks to everyone!"



UMCOR Sunday Postponed

UMCOR (The United Methodist Committee on Relief) Sunday was scheduled for March 22, but due to the suspension of in-person worship due to COVID-19, we will reschedule this special offering once we resume in-person worship.



April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
	Office closed due to stay-at-home order. Pastor Carol available by email & cellphone.					
5 PALM SUNDAY 10:00am Online Worship 11:00am Confirmation Videoconference	6	7	8	9 MAUNDY THURSDAY	10 GOOD FRIDAY	11 Easter Flowers delivered to PAUMC before noon. Time for pick-up TBD .
6:00pm Youth Group Videoconference	7:00pm Hagerty Small Group Videoconference		Office closed due to stay-at-home order. Pastor Carol available by email & cellphone.			
12 EASTER SUNDAY 10:00am Online Worship	13	14	15	16	17	18 Newsletter Deadline
			Office hours expected to resume T-W-TH 9:00-1:00.			
19 10:00am Online Worship	20	21	22	23	24	25
6:00pm Youth Group Videoconference	7:00pm Hagerty Small Group Videoconference					
26 10:00am Online Worship	27	28	29	30		
				7:00pm Church Council Videoconference		

Portland Avenue United Methodist Church
8000 Portland Ave S, Bloomington, MN 55420



GIVE+
Electronic Giving Options



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE EXPEDITE

Join us for worship online Sundays at 10:00 am
~~Sunday School (9:00 am) and Coffee Fellowship (9:30 am)~~ suspended until further notice

Staff

Rev. Carol Zaagsma (Pastor) carol.zaagsma@paumc.org (cell phone for emergencies 651-329-7878)

Kathryn Quam (Administrative Assistant) paumc@paumc.org

Open Position (Youth Director)

Peggy Larson (Music Director) peggylarson@comcast.net

Dale Miller (Accompanist) miller.daler@gmail.com

Judy Richardson-Mahre (SonRise Singers Director) jembrm@charter.net

Mary Nelson (Handbells Director) nelsonc2m@aol.com

Paul Herrmann (Custodian) 612-916-3376

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