

# THE PORTLIGHT

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

## 2021 - A Year of Mission Outreach Projects

*In 2020, the Church Council adopted a goal to support the Mission Outreach Team in coordinating one mission outreach project per month, along with the six traditional UMC denominational special Sunday offerings. The pandemic derailed our plans for a short while, but within a few months we were back on track, and we've kept on rolling right into 2021. We know some of you like to plan ahead, so we've got the tentative list for the year here for your information. Details about each project will be shared in each Portlight newsletter as well as in the announcements in worship. We hope you will make a goal for yourself to support at least one project each quarter. That said, we know many of you faithfully support each and every project. We are deeply grateful for all the ways we are able, as a congregation, to reach out and help heal a hurting world!*

**January** - Valley View Elementary Teacher & Staff Appreciation

**February** - Thank you to Bloomington Police and Fire Stations

**March** - Minnesota Foodshare Month (VEAP)

**April** - TBD

**May** - Minnesota Annual Conference Love Offering

**June** - TBD

**July** - School Supply Drive

**August** - Feed My Starving Children

**September** - Cornerstone Dinner

**October** - Hats & Gloves (& maybe coats) for Valley View Elementary

**November** - Give a Little Gift (Walker Health Center)

**December** - Hats, Gloves & Socks for Simpson Shelter

February 2021

### Our Mission

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

### Our Vision

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



# Pastor's Message *Rev. Carol Zaagsma*

One of the most common questions I get asked these days is, "When are we going to get back together for worship?" While we know in our hearts there is still significant risk for our demographic to worship in person, there is a yearning that tugs on our heart-strings to see one another without the veil of a computer screen. We miss one another!

And yet I invite you to reflect for a moment on all the ways we have "come together" as a faith community over the last year, despite the restrictions of this pandemic. What God is doing through the people of The PORT is inspiring!

It's pretty clear that our need to shelter-at-home starting in March 2020 caught us off guard. The decision was made on a Friday, which didn't give much time to react to the news. Even so, we did what we could do - we sent our first "Worship While Away" email with our first Worship Guide containing a couple of prayers, a scripture reading, a brief message, and a couple of links to meaningful worship songs available on YouTube. A couple days later, we identified all those in our congregation without email and mailed physical copies of the same Worship Guide to them (with words typed to a couple of hymns in place of the YouTube links).

We did the same thing the next Sunday. But the Sunday after that - we enjoyed our first online worship with a video uploaded to our newly created YouTube channel! To be able to adjust so significantly to a medium our congregation had no experience with is nothing short of astounding, and it is evidence of God's work in and through us, even during the pandemic. We continue to worship online with a number of different musicians and liturgists participating, along with the steady leadership of Peggy, Dale and me.

Next to adjust was our Mission Outreach Team. You may recall that we had a goal in 2020 to participate in one mission outreach project every month of the year. The pandemic derailed that plan. Even so, we started with the "Holy Week Challenge" to feed ten families of four for a month (this was a goal of \$1,200). By the end of this challenge, The PORT had received \$4,600 to forward to VEAP. This outpouring of love for our neighbors was continued with Operation Sunshine (hand-decorated yard signs along Portland Avenue to encourage and thank first responders and essential

workers), creating a scholarship for an African American high school senior planning to pursue a career as a teacher, sponsoring another VEAP food drive in honor of Linda Schesso's retirement, and sponsoring catered dinner service for Cornerstone Shelter. Each opportunity was met with far more participation and generosity than the goal we had set. Given the challenges, these accomplishments are nothing short of astounding, and evidence of God's work in and through us, even during the pandemic.

The Congregational Care Team adjusted as well, organizing PORT Pals to pair people together as telephone check-in buddies, hosting monthly Virtual Coffee Fellowship videoconference calls as a way to remain connected, and providing additional social opportunities through a Virtual Scavenger Hunt and Virtual BINGO. Given the challenges, these accomplishments are nothing short of astounding, and evidence of God's work in and through us, even during the pandemic.

A small sub-group of leaders, along with many folks providing gift baskets and handcrafted items, figured out a way to create an online store to serve as our Annual Holiday Bazaar this year. Given how different this platform was from our traditional Holiday Bazaar, this was nothing short of astounding, and evidence of God's work in and through us, even during the pandemic.

So, what does 2021 have in store for us? I am optimistic about the prospect of several different vaccines to help in our goal to get back to in-person worship. I also know that we will need to put some additional safety protocols in place before we can return to in-person worship. This will require us to look carefully at all aspects of our Sunday morning routine, including how our welcomers greet people, how ushers handle bulletins and the offering, when the choir can sing again, and what sanitizing jobs we will need volunteers to do before the congregation arrives and after they leave. If your leaders continue to work through these requirements with the same creativity and tenacity as 2020, then we will be poised to return to in-person worship as soon as reasonably possible. Until then, we will keep on carrying on, offering evidence as often as we can of God's work in and through us, even during the pandemic.

*Pastor Carol*



## Youth Group News

February 28 - 6:00 pm Video-conference (NOTE: this is the only youth group meeting this month).



Topic: “Lump” Nooma Video 010 with Rob Bell. Summary: All of us have done things...big or small...that we regret. In this video with discussion following, we’ll explore how the ways we mess up still don’t change the way God feels about us...and that is that God love us, and there’s nothing we can do to prevent that.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89283842158?pwd=eTFiM0F3V1E5SkYzKy9reitnZkh0dz09>  
or call (312) 626-6799 Meeting ID 892 8384 2158 Passcode 132338

## Lenten Small Groups Postponed

We have a tradition of convening small groups during the Lenten season, but this year we’re planning instead a 5-week small group study following Easter that will bring us into early May.

Watch the next Portlight for more information! It’s a church-wide study intended to help us all grow in our faith and in our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus with intention.



## Conference-wide News by Bishop David Bard

### The Joyful Journey: “You say goodbye, and I say hello”

*Bishop David Bard is interim bishop for the Minnesota Conference and resident bishop in the Michigan Conference.*



Friends in Christ in the Minnesota Conference,

I greet you in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.

I am David Bard, United Methodist Bishop, and for 2021 the interim bishop of the Minnesota Conference. As I sit down to write this letter to you all, the line from a song comes to mind: “You say goodbye, and I say hello.” FYI, it’s The Beatles.

Four-and-a-half years ago, we said goodbye. I was born in Duluth, where I grew up and went to high school and college. I attended United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, and was ordained a deacon in the Minnesota Conference in 1984 and an elder in 1987. That’s how things were done back then. I served a number of

appointments in the Minnesota Conference, taking some time to go back to school to earn a Ph.D. from Southern Methodist University in the field of Christian ethics. My dissertation dealt with Christian social ethics and democratic political theory, and right now I think I could write an entirely new chapter. My service in Minnesota included appointments on the Iron Range and at First UMC (the Coppertop) in Duluth. I was superintendent of the Northwest District, the district in which I began my pastoral ministry, from 1998-2005. For many years, I served on the Board of Ordained Ministry. In 2016, I was elected a bishop and assigned to the Michigan Conference. We said goodbye. Now we say hello. For some of us, it will be a meeting of old friends. For others, new friends.

What brought us to this place? With the postponement of the meeting of the North Central Jurisdiction (NCJ), no election of new bishops, and the retirement of two bishops—including Bishop Ough—our jurisdiction needed to make changes in providing episcopal leadership to the conferences in the NCJ. I was asked and agreed to serve as the interim bishop of the Minnesota Conference while continuing my responsibilities as the resident bishop of the Michigan Conference.

*(continued on page 7)*

# Mission Outreach

## February Mission Outreach Project – “Thank you” to the Bloomington Police & Fire Departments

We have an opportunity in February to say “thank you” to the police and fire departments in Bloomington. At the end of the month, we plan to order and deliver fruit and veggie trays to the police headquarters in Civic Plaza as well as the fire stations #1 and #3, which are the two Bloomington fire stations East of 35W.

There are two great ways to participate in this project. First, we’re looking for notes of thanks or encouragement we can give to our first responders. Draw a picture, or handwrite or type a note in the designated “thank you boxes” found on this page. Then mail or drop off your notes to the church office (office hours are T-W-TH from 9:00-1:00) or scan and email them to [paumc@paumc.org](mailto:paumc@paumc.org) so that they are received no later than February 25, 2021.

We will take the thank you notes we receive and create a bigger, collective “thank you card” for each of the three locations we are focusing on. We’d really like a great show of support for our police and firefighters, so spend a moment to write a note of thanks today! We would show an even greater sense of gratitude if each household wrote or drew one note of thanks to the police and a second note for firefighters.

The second way to participate is to help purchase the fruit and veggie trays. Due to the pandemic, we will need to order these items from a local grocery store. To financially support this effort, please give securely online at [paumc.org/giving](http://paumc.org/giving) and select “first responders” or send your check to the church office with “first responders” in the memo line. Thanks for taking a moment to say “thank you” to those first responders we rarely take time to thank.

*Please cut out your thank you note(s)/  
picture(s) and drop off, mail, or email to  
the church office by February 25, 2021.*





## Special UMC Offering: Human Relations Day

On Sunday, February 21, 2021, we will observe Human Relations Day, which is one of the six special offerings received across the whole United Methodist denomination. This offering is aimed at helping bridge the gap between church and community by supporting neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services, and work with at-risk youth through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs. When we all work together, we can make a big difference in making the world a better place. To participate in this offering, please give securely online at [paumc.org/giving](http://paumc.org/giving) and select “Human Relations Day,” or send your check to the church office and write “Human Relations Day” in the memo line. Thank you!

## Valley View Elementary Teacher & Staff Appreciation Project Recap

In January, we were invited to say “thank you” to the teachers and staff of Valley View Elementary School as a way to offer encouragement and a blessing in what has been a rather challenging year. Thanks to your participation in this effort, we were able to supply individually wrapped snacks for the staff break room on January 19, which was the first day back to in-person learning for K-2 grade. Grade 3-6 staff and teachers are scheduled to return February 1, so we’ll provide additional snacks then. This small gesture goes a long way in saying, “We know you’re here and we appreciate you.”

In addition, we had enough participation to purchase one \$6 coffee shop gift card for each of the 90 teachers and staff at the school. Members of the Mission Outreach Team along with a couple of our congregation’s handcrafted greeting card-makers came together to handwrite a card to go along with each of the gift cards. The Mission Outreach Team knew this would be a stretch goal to begin 2021 with, and thanks to your generous support (receiving \$765 total for this project), we began this year showing our huge heart for Valley View Elementary School, which is just a few blocks away from The PORT.







As I think about the year ahead, I am genuinely excited by the ministry we might do together and the lessons we might learn together. The Minnesota Conference has solid leadership and a strong sense of direction. As interim bishop, I want to continue to help the conference focus on living into its vision and future, face the adaptive challenges in living into the vision in a time such as this, monitor the temperature/set a tone, and foster hope.

In [a sermon](#) made available to the Minnesota Conference earlier this month, I said: “We will share journey together in the coming year, and I am committed to working with you toward a more vital and vibrant Methodism here in Minnesota.

I will keep before us our aspirations for deeper discipleship; for more vibrant congregations where people are growing in love of God and neighbor, where they are reaching new people and inviting them to the adventure of discipleship, where they are working to heal a broken world; and for a Methodism rooted in Jesus, grounded in Wesleyan theology, inclusive of all persons, and engaged in the work of justice and reconciliation.” I also preached that the journey will be step by step, with some potholes along the way, but also grace upon grace.

What might all this mean more concretely? I will be working with the Appointive Cabinet to make clergy appointments. I will be working with the leadership of the conference to help us continue to live into its vision while also addressing the realities of a pandemic and post-pandemic world. Most of my meetings will be virtual, at least for the coming months, just as most of my meetings in Michigan are currently virtual. As travel opens up during the year, I will travel to Minnesota some. My work in Michigan will continue—working with the Michigan Appointive Cabinet to make clergy appointments, and working with conference leadership to continue to live into Michigan’s vision while addressing the realities of a pandemic and post-pandemic world.

These changes mean I will be working harder (or maybe better, longer) and I plan to also work “smarter.” I consistently work to return messages promptly, and know that the definition of “prompt” may change. Minnesota Conference leaders will be assuming some

new responsibilities in relationship to the bishop’s office. It may take longer to schedule an appointment with me, and I may have to say “no” to some things I might have once been able to accommodate. I will not be able to preach often and might need to send a video greeting rather than share a celebration with your congregation in person. I have also shared these expectations with the Michigan Conference.

I will write something for you every month, and some months it will look like what I am also sharing with the Michigan Conference. I call it “The Joyful Journey.” I will be working with conference leadership to offer advice about in-person gatherings as we emerge out of the coronavirus pandemic. We remain in the [red phase](#), and know that even as cases begin to decline, wearing masks and social distancing will be with us for some time. I will hold you in prayer as we are in ministry together.

I ask for your patience and prayers. I am surrounded by wonderful leaders here and in Michigan who will help us make this new arrangement work. There are unanswered questions right now, and questions we don’t even know we need to ask. I remain confident that we will all make this work together, and as we do we will be helping The United Methodist Church think about creative ways to offer episcopal leadership.

I’m with you on this joyful journey along well-traveled roads that are also ever new.

*[Bishop David Bard](#) is interim bishop for the Minnesota Conference, a role he began Jan. 1, 2021. He also serves as resident bishop for the Michigan Conference.*

*Editor’s Note: This article references being in the red phase related to COVID-19. Since the original writing of this article, we have progressed to the orange phase, and remain there at the time of this printing.*

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 online worship on 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](mailto:carol.zaagsma@paumc.org) (cell phone for emergencies 651-329-7878)

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/PortlandAvenueUnitedMethodistChurch>





Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 10:00am Online Worship/ Communion 10:30am Congregational Care Videoconference	8	9	10	11	12	13 2:00pm Virtual Trivial
14 Valentine's Day 10:00am Online Worship	15 Presidents' Day Newsletter Deadline	16	17	18	19	20
21 Human Relations Day 10:00am Online Worship 10:30am Virtual Coffee Fellowship	22	23	24	25 6:30pm Caregivers Support Group Videoconference	26	27
28 10:00am Online Worship 6:00pm Youth Group Videoconference	<p><b>TUNE IN FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP ONLINE @ 10:00 AM:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.youtube.com/c/PortlandAvenueUnitedMethodistChurch">https://www.youtube.com/c/PortlandAvenueUnitedMethodistChurch</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/">https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/</a></li> </ul>					