



The SPIRE

First United Methodist Church

www.albionfirst.org

find us on Facebook

600 East Michigan Avenue

Albion, MI 49224

(517) 629-9425

***“He is not here; he has risen,
just as he said.”*** *Matt 28:6 (NIV)*

Friends,

It seems a bit cliché to say that we are living in unprecedented times, but how else can we describe our world today. None of us could have imagined, just a few weeks ago, that we would be here, fearing for the physical and economic health of our families, our neighbors and our nation while trying our best to stay separate and at home.

Like you, I have struggled with the disruption to my routine. I have been anxious, irritable and unable to concentrate at times when my worry gets the best of me. I have tried to accept that these feelings are normal (and temporary). I pray that you are showing yourself the same grace.

Despite these challenges, we will soon celebrate Easter once again. It will not be the same this year. I will miss the delicious brunch, the joyous music and the fabulous sermon (let's just assume it would have been great 😊). Despite the absence of our traditions, I can't think of a better time to be reminded of the promise of resurrection.

Jesus' contemporaries were waiting for a messiah who would be a conquering hero, to put an end, once and for all, to all that threatened and hurt them. Instead, they were surprised by a savior who showed up in the midst of their vulnerability, pain and suffering. That still surprises us all these years later.

God is still meeting us in our weakness and our vulnerability in order to comfort, strengthen,

April 2020

Christian Sympathy Leadership Listing Prayers	2
Managing a Church in Challenging Times Staying Connected While Apart	3
Albion Rallying To Help It's Neighbors	4

Follow Jesus; Love Everyone

and equip us to comfort and strengthen others. God is still meeting us in our weakness and our struggles so that we know that God loves us and is always with us. And once we accept that truth - that God is always on our side - then we can persevere and flourish even in the face of struggle.

Continue loving, supporting and reaching out to one another. We will get through this together, and when we do, we may just be surprised by how much more aware we've become of God's abiding presence.

Stay safe and healthy.
Pastor Leslee

Prayers

Dave Seely, Tom Hartwell,
Jasmine Luce, Greg Metzler,
Kelly Wilder, Fred Wilder,
Tom Chisholm, Marilyn Knibury,
Julia Landon, Hilda Ebbinghaus,
Barbara Slaughter, Eva Rottenbiller,
Ken Bentley, and Pastor Tom Hollowood @
home

Barb Stowell @ Maplewood, Marshall

Edward Sobie, Jr. @ Chippewa Correctional
Facility, Kincheloe

Donna Gaskell @ Copley, OH

Betty Beese @ Glazier Assisted Living, Chelsea



Christian Sympathy

Longtime member of our congregation,
R. Bud Davis, passed away on March 19.
Please keep his family and friends
in your thoughts and prayers.

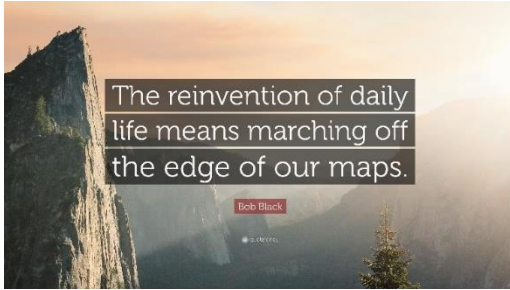


Leadership Listing

Lay Leader	Sharon Hostetler shostetler@albion.edu
Church Council Chair	Mark Robison majerobi@gmail.com
Treasurer	Sally Ammerman sallya@wowway.com
Trustees Chair (Building & Property)	Barbara Rafaill plantgirl@rafaill.com
Staff-Parish Chair (Personnel)	Steve Noble steven.noble820@gmail.com
Finance	Rick Lange langehome.1@gmail.com
Pastor	Leslee Fritz pastorleslee1@gmail.com
Missions Co- Chairs	John Williams Donna Williams
Memorial Chair	Carol Maynard
Choir Director	Drew Dunham
Music Director/ Pianist	Jan Fourn
Administrative Assistant	Cindi Klingel albionfumc@gmail.com
Housekeeper	Lynn Markovich
Custodian	Larry Maynard

Managing a Church in Challenging Times

Though our church is closed and in-person worship is not possible



right now, much of the work of the church goes on and like everyone, we are reinventing what we do, as we do it. A few items of note:

- As you've hopefully seen, Pastor Leslee is providing recorded messages each Sunday (and there will be more during Holy Week).
- Our email-based prayer group continues to share concerns (if you want to join, just ask Pastor Leslee)
- Our new Connection Groups should help us stay in closer communication (see next column).
- The Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church is working overtime to offer resources for creative worship, remote pastoral care, financial management and more. Pastor Leslee has participated in a many webinars through the conference in search of resources and tools that will benefit our church. The Conference has also helped financially by offering a 6 month holiday from paying benefit costs and by providing our Zoom license.
- Our outstanding staff continue to do all that they can from a distance to manage mail, messages, outreach, building maintenance and to support worship.
- We continue to respond to outreach needs in the community, including filling Baby Pantry requests.
- Financially, we are ok for now, despite not receiving regular offerings. Please do all that you can to remain current with your pledge by mailing checks to the church or setting up an automatic payment with your bank.

Staying Connected While Apart

Are you getting bored just hanging around the house? Miss connecting with friends and neighbors? Beginning Sunday, we're launching **Connection Groups** using Zoom technology. These small groups will provide us an opportunity to stay connected during the time we need to be apart. All you need is a computer or a phone and you can take part.



Sundays at 11:00am (Begins April 5)	Virtual Coffee Hour
Mondays at 2:00pm (Begins April 6)	Monday Meet Up
Wednesdays at 8am (Begins April 8)	Wednesday Social
Fridays at 10:00am (Begins April 10)	Prayer & Reflection

Just email, text or call Pastor Leslee (pastorleslee1@gmail.com, 517-896-9096) to let her know you're interested in joining and she'll provide you the Zoom link. If you've never used Zoom before, don't worry, she will help walk through it.

Got an idea for a group you want to lead? Maybe you do yoga, practice meditation, teach Spanish ... whatever skill you want to share can be shared via Zoom at no cost. Feel free to be creative ...

Albion Rallying to Help its Neighbors

Early in March, Albion community leaders came together to begin coordinating the response to the significant impacts COVID-19 will have on our community. From those initial conversations, an Albion Coordinated Pandemic Response Team has formed and is meeting regularly. Pastor Leslee serves as the faith community representative on this team.

This Response team is working to marshal resources, identify needs and help facilitate response in a timely manner. The group helped launch the emergency child care being provided at Kids N Stuff for children of health care workers and first responders.

Laura Overholt, from the Food Hub, and Pastor Leslee are coordinating food distribution on behalf of the group for Albion and Homer. In addition to the regular bi-monthly distributions, a weekly food distribution for seniors is now being coordinated through the churches, with 22 churches participating. Already, more than 600 boxes have been distributed. The team is working with local restaurants and others willing to provide additional food resources. Pastor Leslee and Cindi even recently made a trip to Binder Park Zoo to collect food they donated to the effort.

Area schools also continue to work to feed students. Three times each week, food is available for area kids at Harrington Elementary, Crowell School and the Opportunity High School. Marshall Academy students are receiving home delivery and a van takes food to some of Albion's housing complexes as well.

The City of Albion, Albion-Homer United Way, the Albion Community Foundation, Summit Pointe, Oaklawn, the Forks Senior Center, the Albion Chamber, the Food Hub and many more partners are involved in the effort which will continue for as long as it is needed.

How can you help?

Pray for all involved to stay safe and strong ... consider donating to the [Albion-Homer United Way](http://www.albionhomeruw.org) (AHUW), www.albionhomeruw.org to help fund the Albion-Homer Emergency Relief Fund (ERF). 100% of donations will stay right here to help people in need. And thanks to the Albion Community Foundation, every donation is matched dollar for dollar!

If you know someone in need or feeling overwhelmed, encourage them to call 2-1-1 for service referral or the Summit Pointe 24-hour crisis line at 800-632-5449, or let Pastor Leslee know how she can help.

