

# The SPIRE

### First United Methodist Church

www.albionfirst.org find us on Facebook 600 East Michigan Avenue Albion, MI 49224 (517) 629-9425

### Dear Friends,

Seven Sundays have come and gone since we last gathered to worship. It seems like not that long ago, and yet forever, since we have been able to be the church as we knew it.

I'm sure you are asking, as I am, when we will "get back to normal." The simple answer is that we don't know. We don't know when it will be safe to open the church to daily business. We don't know when it will be safe to gather in worship. We will listen to the guidance of our secular leaders, our Bishop and common sense as we engage in that process.

Bishop Bard began that conversation (see page 2) and more information will soon be coming from state leaders. I expect that in the days ahead we will have much more to say on how and when we will be able to be together again.

In all this uncertainty, I know one thing for sure. We have not stopped being the church. We continue to engage in ministry and mission in new and creative ways. We still provide food, diapers, financial assistance and care for those in need. Nearly 20 of you were involved in the Easter project creating gifts for one another. You are engaging in online worship and we are checking in on one another regularly.

The people of Albion FUMC are proving over and over again that God's love in a shared community of faith cannot be contained within the walls of a building. I will be forever grateful for all that you have done to offer hope, comfort and grace in this challenging time.

### Leslee

# May 2020 Bishop Bard Letter 2 A Little Extra Care From 3 the FUMC Kitchen Leadership Listing Prayers Church Finances Holding Their 4 Own During Closure Technology Enables Some Church Activities to Resume Calendar 5

Follow Jesus; Love Everyone



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

Echoing again the words of Paul, "I thank my God every

time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for you, because of your sharing in the work of the gospel from the first day until now."

Thank you, Michigan United Methodists for your patience, your persistence, your energy, your creativity in being the church in ministry for Jesus Christ in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you to the Michigan Conference district superintendents and staff for your tireless work in supporting local churches and pastors in their ministry. To you all, your work brings me joy in this tremendously difficult time.

In mid-March, when I first asked us to refrain from in-person gatherings, including worship, who could have known we would be here as April comes to an end. In Michigan over 38,000 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and we've lost over 3,400 of our fellow Michiganders. The African-American community has been hit particularly hard, as have the elderly.

In late-March I told you when we next were able to gather, I would declare it to be Easter, but honestly coming back together will be more like the raising of Lazarus, slow, awkward, aching, a strange mixture of joy and tears. By week's end the Michigan Conference will provide a set of questions for us all to consider as we think about coming together again. Next week we will share a more detailed resource on re-opening. This time between now and May 15, when I've asked us to continue to refrain from in-person gatherings, should be used to consider

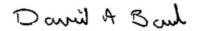
important plans for returning to church buildings for gatherings and activities.

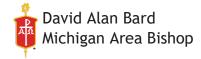
In addition to providing guidelines for churches, the Michigan Conference continues to look at options for Annual Conference 2020, and announcements about this are coming soon.

Friends, we have and are giving up a lot. I miss not being with you in your churches. I miss the simple gifts of a handshake or hug, and I grieve that such gifts will have to wait even longer. This is such a time of grief and sorrow, and for many the grief is profound. I am also moved by you, the United Methodist Church in Michigan. We are giving up a lot. The very idea of "church" conjures up in our imaginations gathering together. We are giving up a lot, but self-giving is part of our identity as followers of Jesus, who emptied himself, who gave of himself. We stay home, not only for our own health, but for the wellbeing of others. We will wear masks, awkward as that may be, out of love and concern for others.

Easter came and it is still a way off, but we remain Easter people. Every day to us is Easter, with its resurrection song. Every day we proclaim in our self-giving, in our loving, the resurrection, the ultimate triumph of grace, kindness and love. It is an honor to be Easter people with you. Thank you.

Thank you. Be well. Know God is with you.





### **Prayers**

Dave Seely, Tom Hartwell,
Jasmine Luce, Greg Metzler,
Kelly Wilder, Fred Wilder,
Tom Chisholm, Marilyn Knibury,
Susan Connor, 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

### A Little Extra Care From the FUMC

Kitchen

To help feed the increasing number of people feeling food insecurity, Teri Nelson and Barb Lange have spent many hours in the church kitchen (separately for safety) turning odd ingredients



and left-over supplies into delicious foods, including soups, pudding, BBQ chicken, cookies, muffins and more.

The recipients of this fresh, delicious food have been truly grateful for their kindness.

### 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

# Church Finances Holding Their Own During Closure

Small businesses of all types have felt the impact of needed stay-at-home orders during the pandemic (please shop local restaurants and retailers whenever you can!). Church budgets are not immune. Without a regular Sunday offering, giving typically declines. In addition, our church is without rental income from the myriad of events usually held in our space this time of year.

At this point in the year, we would have anticipated receiving slightly more than ¼ of the \$162,140 in pledged giving as well as a roughly equal share of the expected \$28,000 in unpledged contributions for the operating budget. While final April numbers are not yet in, we expect to be somewhat below those expectations. Many of you have continued to send in pledges and we are grateful for your on-going faithfulness. Please do all that you can to remain current with your pledge by mailing checks to the church, dropping them in our locked mailbox just inside the Oswego Street glass doors (open 24 hours) or setting up an automatic payment with your bank.

To help ensure that we can continue to meet our financial obligations, including paying our staff, the Finance Committee and Church Council voted to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program loan available through the federal CARES Act recently passed by Congress. We were approved earlier this week for a loan of just under \$19,000 to be used for payroll over the next several months. If used as allowed under the act, we expect that the loan will be converted to a grant after 60 days, thus eliminating our requirement to repay it. This small step will help ensure that we remain financially sound regardless of how long our needed separation lasts.

If you have any questions about the PPP loan, or other financial issues, please just ask Pastor Leslee or Rick Lange.

## Technology Enables Some Church Activities to Resume



The Board of Trustees gather via Zoom to debate church business during their April meeting.

With the aid of technology, some church activities have restarted in the last few weeks. Standing committees, including the Church Council, Finance and Staff Parish have held meetings.

The kick-off meeting of the Wesley Renovation Team was held (you'll hear more about that soon) and many congregants are re-connecting during the Sunday morning Virtual Coffee Hour.

No doubt, technology will continue to help us stay connected in the days ahead. The church's zoom account can be used (without additional cost) for meetings of all kinds. If you're a part of a group that would like to try it, just let Pastor Leslee know.

Office Hours: Sunday Schedule:

Monday-Thursday 8:00 am - 12:30 pm

Friday 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Fellowship 9:30 Choir 9:30

Worship 10:00

Fellowship 11:00

Sermon Discussion 11:30

**May 2020** 

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Worship via YouTube 11a Virtual Cioffee Hour via ZOOM 4p Scouts BSA Parent Meeting - online	4 7p Scouts BSA Troop 158 online	5 4p Finance via ZOOM 5:30p Church Council via ZOOM	9	7	œ	6
<b>10</b> Worship via YouTube 11a Virtual Cioffee Hour via ZOOM	11 5:30p Wesley Renovation Team via ZOOM 7p Scouts BSA Troop 158 online	12	13	<b>14</b> 6:30p Trustees via ZOOM	15	16
<b>17</b> Worship TO BE DETERMINED	<b>18</b> 5:30p SPRC via ZOOM 7p Scouts BSA Troop 158 online	19	20 5:30p WU/SIS Mentoring TENTATIVE	<b>21</b> 12p ➡Blood Drive	22	23
24 Worship TO BE DETERMINED '31 Worship TO BE DETERMINED	25 MEMORIAL DAY Church Office Closed 7p Scouts BSA Troop 158	26 3p Food Hub Distribution	72	28	29	30