

Dunes Digest



FROM THE PASTOR

Pastor's Thoughts

Rev. Lou Grettenberger, Senior Pastor

Dear Friends,

As we end 2020 and begin by 2021, we do so with hope. We hope that as each month ticks past we will return to some semblance of normalcy. We have learned a lot this past year about what really matters. One of those important things is our desire to get together. Although we have been grateful for the ways we have connected, we have missed meeting. Not being together in person—singing, praying, learning, laughing, crying, hugging, worshipping—has been a great loss. But I am hoping when we finally come together that the gatherings will be more purpose and meaning-filled.

For Christmas, I received an interesting book from my daughter Emma called The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker. Ms. Parker articulates in the book how important gathering is. She also acknowledges how many of us are worn out by the many gatherings we attend—meetings, clubs, boards, study times. She suggests that we are not worn out because gathering is unimportant. We are worn-out because gathering is not treated and prepared in a way that provides an opportunity to really engage interpersonally. Our preparations do not suggest that we find meeting and gathering to be truly important.

Ms. Parker's premise is that gatherings are not equal. Gatherings that are provided with a purpose and plan are more likely to be meaningful and memorable. When we think carefully about what the purpose is, it informs who should be invited, and where the event should be hosted. When she speaks of planning, she is not speaking about doing things the "right way" or "the way we have always done it," but instead providing the best opportunities, whatever that may look like, for people to connect in deep and surprising ways.

As I relate the book to our experiences in worship, Bible study, small groups, I am struck by how incredibly important it is for each of us as "people-gatherers" to help people experience a "temporary alternative reality." We need to get away from everyday pressures and stresses and gather in ways that brings respite from and energy to our daily lives.

As we enter a new year, let's think about why we worship, so we know with whom and when we should worship. Let's evaluate our Bible studies and meeting nights in light of what our purposes for those gathering might be. Let's not be afraid to be challenged by studying and debating with people who think, talk and maybe even worship differently than we do. It is time for a full-engagement around the issues facing our church. Nothing could be more scary than what we have just been through together.

I am excited to gather again as soon as we are able. I am hopeful that things that seemed like huge barriers will pale in comparison with the challenges that we have met in 2020 and will conquer in 2021. May the Spirit of God lead us all the way.

Pastor Lou

P.S. Gatherings for now continue virtually, but our task force will be meeting soon to consider state and UMC recommendations regarding in-person gatherings as they are rolled out.

United Methodist Church of the Dunes
717 Sheldon Rd, Grand Haven, MI 49417
www.umcdunes.org
(616) 842-7980

In Remembrance

Kay Moessner died on December 18, 2020. Please keep Kay's loved ones in your prayers.

Staying Connected

Contact the Church

A staff member is answering the church phones from 9 a.m.—1 p.m., Monday through Friday. There may be exceptions for holidays.

Phone: (616) 842-7980

Email: office@umcdunes.org

For emergencies/pastoral care:
(231) 883-9806 or
pastorlou@umcdunes.org

Offering

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of Church of the Dunes. Offerings may be mailed to the church at 717 Sheldon Road, Grand Haven, MI 49417. There are also options for giving online. Visit <https://umcdunes.org/give/> for details.

Info about In-Person Gatherings

In-person worship services and gatherings at the church have been suspended. Please remember that masks and social distancing are required if you are outside of your vehicle on church property. Thank you for your help as we work to support the good health of one another and our community.

Church Staffing Update - A Message from the Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee

December 22, 2020

Dear Friends of Church of the Dunes,

The year 2020 has been challenging and unique for all of us. We have done our best to keep our staff actively working even when their duties have had to shift based on COVID-19 protocols. Even with all we have done as a congregation, the current situation has created budget and staffing challenges for us. Though all of this you have remained faithful in giving, and leaders have been faithful in cutting expenditures where possible, further changes are still needed.

The job duties/activities have changed as we have moved to more online and internet delivered ministry. Some changes were September 2020, and others will begin January 1, 2021. We hope the end result will provide the opportunity for our staff to be in right positions within a budget we can afford. We know these changes can be painful for our staff and congregation alike. As those who support our ministry, we want to keep all of you informed of our staffing design, while respecting the sensitive nature of personnel decisions.

In the office, hours have been reduced for the Administrative Assistant and Office Assistant. Our custodian has moved from full to $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Our organist time was reduced by 25% due to specific reductions in workload. We now have just one food person, our Kitchen Coordinator, who is working very few hours to keep the kitchens sanitary and up to health codes. Our Communication Director and Worship Arts Director's hours remain the same with some significant shifts in focus. Our Finance Manager is working $\frac{1}{4}$ time. Finally, our Children's and Youth Ministry have been combined into one Family Ministry area, which will include oversight by a ($\frac{1}{2}$ time+) Director of Family Ministry, Dan Malseed, and a ($\frac{1}{4}$ time +) Assistant Director of Family Ministries, Ashley Boersma.

Please continue to support our 9 remaining staff members, and me, through these changes as we do our best to support you. We pray God's blessing on our work together for Christ. Thank you for your continued financial support.

God bless you All,

Pastor Lou

On behalf of our Staff Parish Relations Committee (S.P.R.C.)

WITH GRATITUDE

A Message from the Planned Giving/Memorial Fund Committee

Recently, we have received a very generous gift of \$20,000 from a member of our church. It was given in memory of her late husband and in honor of her in recognition of their many years in the teaching profession in the area school systems. It is a wonderful way to carry on that legacy that they both cared about so much.



As designated by the donor, these funds, which will be administrated by the Memorial Fund Committee, are to be used to fund education for members, constituents, children, grandchildren, and continuing education for church staff.

It is the desire of the committee, that when any one of the above may have a need or use of these funds, that they would contact the committee with their request in writing and the committee will act accordingly.

Our church is certainly blessed with this gift and the Memorial Fund Committee looks forward to administrating these funds as to the donor's wishes and to the Glory of God.

Peace,

Roger C. VanderMolen, Chairperson

Robert Mann, Incoming Chairperson

Planned Giving/Memorial Fund Committee

THANKING AND THANKING SOME MORE

A Thank You from the Communications Office

Carla Kocher, Director of Communications

I've always been a big fan of communication. My appreciation for it grew by leaps and bounds as 2020 brought roadblocks to ways we are accustomed to interacting. Face-to-face communication, one of the ways humans communicate most often, "got benched" for the second, third, and fourth quarters. With the onset of a global pandemic, daily lives changed drastically, and written and online communications had exponentially more messages to carry. Yet, Church of the Dunes newsletter article and bulletin announcements contributors didn't miss a play. Articles and information kept coming in. Groups and committees worked creatively to adapt ministries to these times, and to pass along information to be shared with the Church of the Dunes family.

It is inspiring, and I am so grateful. Thank you to you who send newsletter articles, provide background information for articles, send items for bulletin announcements and weekly emails, and keep church staff up-to-date on the creative ways your ministries are working in these times.

Just as importantly, thank you to you who read what is being written and sent, and you who watch what is

recorded in the church's online worship videos. By reading, watching, and listening to these communications, you bless and give meaning to the efforts of the many who prepare it. Thank you.

I wish you a New Year filled with blessings. God is with us - and communicating with us - always.

Carla

PREPARING An Advent Season to Remember

The year 2020 was out of the ordinary, to say the least. Despite the many challenges and concerns filling daily lives, Church of the Dunes prepared to celebrate Jesus' birth in an out-of-the-ordinary way. Thanks to many creative thinkers and volunteers, each Sunday evening during Advent, there was a drive-in Advent wreath lighting with carols and scriptures on the church grounds. This could be experienced from inside a car and listened to on the car's FM radio. Those who attended sang along with Advent carols from the comfort and safety of their vehicle, as an accompaniment played over the radio. Advent thoughts and prayers were spoken as each hand-crafted, LED-light-powered, giant candle was lit. The scriptures of the season were read between carols. The theme word for each week in Advent was spelled out in three-foot letters in front of the beautifully decorated church building.

Many wonderful volunteers and dedicated staff members made these special evenings possible. They brainstormed at planning meetings, organized willing helpers, directed traffic, distributed hymnals, built, gathered, and set up decorations, and so much more. Thank you to all who brought these Advent wreath lightings to life.

There are many things about 2020 that we will remember. One of the joyful memories will be these beautiful, meaningful, Advent Sunday evenings.



hope

peace

joy

love



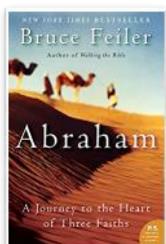
Photos: Susan Thorpe, Nancy Collins, Carla Kocher

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

NEW Classes and Discussion Groups in January

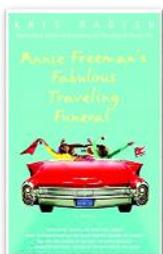
Jan Stuart, Coordinator, Adult Education

These online studies and discussion groups for adults are open to all Church of the Dunes members and friends. There is a quick-start guide to Zoom at the end of this page.



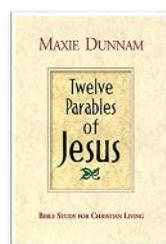
Sunday Book Discussion Group - "Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths"

The Sunday Book Discussion Group (formerly BBQ – Basic Beliefs and Questions) will meet on Zoom on Sunday, January 17 at 4:30 to discuss the book "Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths" by Bruce Feiler. "In this book, the author sets out on a personal quest to understand the patriarch of three major world religions, Abraham. The author uncovers fascinating, little known details of the man who defines faith for half the world."* If you would like to participate, please contact group facilitator Jill Miller at (616) 834-4085 or jmiller0426@gmail.com.



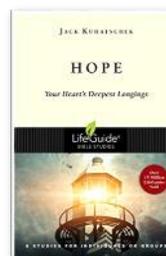
Monday Night Book Group - "Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral"

This book discussion group is meeting on the fourth Monday evening of each month via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. The book up for discussion on January 25 is "Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral" by Kris Radish. "For Katherine Givens and the four women about to become her best friends, the adventure begins with a UPS package. Inside is a pair of red sneakers filled with ashes and a note that will forever change their lives...Annie Freeman left one final request—a traveling funeral."* Contact Gayle Cox at rgcox3@gmail.com if you would like to participate.



Tuesday Morning Bible Study - "Twelve Parables of Jesus"

This study meets on Zoom, and begins on January 12 at 10:00 a.m. The discussion will explore the parables of Jesus, using the book "Twelve Parables of Jesus" by Maxie Dunnam. "More than one-third of Jesus' recorded teaching is in the form of parables. Why did Jesus choose parables? Through the parables we can see the world in which Jesus lived." (from the book's introduction). This study is open to all members and friends of Church of the Dunes who would like to join in. For more information and to sign up, please contact facilitator Cathy Shick at (516) 672-4879 or catsong23@aol.com.



Wednesday Friends and Companions - "HOPE: Your Heart's Deepest Longings"

This group meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom, beginning on January 6, to explore and discuss *LifeGuide Bible Study*, "HOPE - Your Heart's Deepest Longings" by Jack Kuhatschek. This study encourages exploration of doubts and fears and the hope and great joy that waits in Jesus, while providing biblical context and thought-provoking questions. Participants are asked to supply their own books. To sign up, please contact facilitator Barry Kram at bwkram@gmail.com.



FaithLink

Let Barry Kram (bwkram@gmail.com) know you are interested in receiving the weekly FaithLink article for discussion on Zoom on Sunday mornings. He will include you in the mailing and give you information about how to join in the discussion.

*Images and *descriptions: amazon.com*

How to participate in a class or discussion group on Zoom: Sign up for free on Zoom.us (this downloads your ability to join meetings). Call or e-mail the class facilitator and let them know you want to be in the class. The facilitator of the class will e-mail you the class meeting ID and the password to enter the class. On the day of the class: go to zoom.us, click on the "Join a Meeting" tab at the top, when it opens it will ask for the meeting ID, and password. Enter those in the spaces provided. When asked if you want to join by video, (which will let you see yourself and others on the screen; you can use the image you see of yourself to center yourself in the picture, etc.) - click yes. Then, the class facilitator will click you into the meeting/class.

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

Resource Information from the Finishing Well Ministry

Susan Thorpe, Coordinator, Finishing Well Ministry (a ministry for 55+)

There is an excellent program in Ottawa County called Smart 911 that you can enroll in for free. Smart 911 stores your important information so that a police officer, fire fighter, or EMT can access it in the event of an emergency. It includes your contact information, current medications, who to call if you are found unable to communicate, family members contact information, etc. With this in place, when you call 911, all your information will appear on the screen at the police or fire department, so they will know a little bit about you. In the event that you have someone dependent on you at home (children or disabled elderly person) the emergency personnel will know what to do for them as well. Here is the link: <https://www.smart911.com/> You can add as much information as you want, so take your time to include important info in case of an unexpected accident or emergency.



CONNECTING

Important Message for Snowbirds

Snowbirds, Church of the Dunes would like to stay in touch with you while you are away this winter. The church database allows for alternate addresses to be used for specific time periods, but the information **does not renew** automatically each year. If you will be away and would like to continue to receive mailings from the church, please contact the church office at office@umcdunes.org or call (616) 842-7980. Church office phones are staffed Monday - Friday, 9 a.m.—1 p.m.

