

Dunes Digest



PASTOR'S NOTES

New Year, New Beginnings

Rev. Lou Grettenberger, Pastor

This is a Day of New Beginnings

Verse 1

*This is a day of new beginnings,
Time to remember and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing,
Laying to rest the pain that's gone.*

Verse 4

*Christ is alive, and goes before us,
To show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
Our God is making all things new.*

These words from a newer hymn written by Brian Wren and arranged by my seminary advisor, Carlton "Sam" Young, sets the tone for these notes and the new year at Church of the Dunes.

As we begin 2025, we are saying good-bye to some church staff and saying welcome and hello to some new church staff. I am reminded of the old children's song that says, "Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold. In other words, both are precious, but in unique ways. This kind of transition is bittersweet. We don't like to say good-bye, none-the-less we are at times forced to do so.

We are saying good-bye to Carla, our capable, compassionate Communications Lead, as we welcome Madelyn, a gifted university senior, who will assume the Communications Lead role in early January.

We will also be saying a somewhat longer "adieu" to Tom, our Finance Manager, who has served ably, managing the challenges of a complex church budget and the myriads of volunteer lay and staff persons who need resources for ministry.

Tom's successor is Virginia, who has worked for many years as a bookkeeper. She will begin work early this month, working alongside Tom. Over this month, Tom will continue working, until Virginia knows the ins and outs of the financial processes of this congregation.

While our hearts grieve the loss of beloved staff members, we can simultaneously look forward to the ministry and gifts new staff will bring us. For old friends and new friends, I am grateful. Please, help me welcome our new staff to our ministry. There is a footnote. We are still looking for a Kitchen Coordinator for Sunday morning coffee fellowship time and Wednesday suppers Please let others know. Sherry is graciously serving in the role until we can find a replacement.

continued next page

Remembrance

Rowena Lloyd

died on November 10, 2024

Joan Riggs

died on November 16, 2024

Please keep Rowena's and Joan's loved ones in your prayers.

Sunday Worship

9:30 a.m.

All are welcome!

Livestream and recordings of services are available on the church's YouTube channel. To find it, search *Dunes Church Grand Haven YouTube*.

Church office hours:

Monday through Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Phone:

(616) 842-7980

Email: office@umcdunes.org

United Methodist Church of the Dunes

717 Sheldon Road
Grand Haven, MI 49417
www.umcdunes.org

Image and illustration credits for this issue: Pixabay.com

continued from page 1

Don't forget to sign up for one of our many adult education classes. I am looking forward to facilitating two classes:

One begins on January 13 and meets at 11:00 a.m. This Bible study is called, "Reading the Bible Together." We will spend an hour reading the Gospel of Luke aloud chapter by chapter and then reflecting upon what we read.

I will also be leading a 12-week book study using the book, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*, by Marcus Borg. We will read one chapter per week and discuss that chapter on Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m.—noon, beginning January 8. More information is on page 6 of this newsletter.

With a new year comes new beginnings. I pray that each of us will be cherishing what has been and the relationships we have had, while we connect and welcome new friends and learn to be better disciples of Jesus Christ. If we do, we will be rich in God's love and grace.

Coming Up In Worship

New Year Faith Renewal

January 5 9:30 a.m.

We will welcome the New Year with a service that focuses on renewing ourselves and our faith.



Epiphany Sunday

January 12 9:30 a.m.

We celebrate the arrival of the Wise Ones to visit the newborn Jesus. Worshipers will receive a beautiful paper star with a word written on it. You are invited to consider how that word applies to your life and faith in the new year.

CREATING TO REMEMBER

Soul Box Project

Val Martin, Church of the Dunes Gun Violence Prevention Task Group

Since 2017, people across the nation have created thousands of “Soul Boxes” (3-by-3-inch paper origami Masu boxes) representing someone who has been killed or injured by gunfire.

In 2025 the gun violence prevention groups at St. John’s Episcopal Church and United Methodist Church of the Dunes are joining efforts to create an exhibit of 1,406 *Soul Boxes* to raise awareness of the magnitude of deaths caused by gunfire. (In Michigan, an average of 1,406 people die by firearms each year.)



You can help us launch this project locally by donating scrapbooking paper (at least 8.5 inches by 8.5 inches), stickers, and flat embellishments. There is a plastic bin for your donations located in the weekday entrance of the church. Donations will be greatly appreciated.

In the future, watch for workshop opportunities to help us make *Soul Boxes*. Then, when our *Soul Box* exhibit is ready, spend some time experiencing the artwork. We believe art can change hearts and heal hearts while honoring victims of gun violence.

Please join us as you are able to create a local *Soul Box* exhibit that provokes thought and inspires positive action.

Image source: soulboxproject.org



FLOWERS FOR THE SANCTUARY

Would you like to sponsor altar flowers on a Sunday during 2025?

Please contact the church office to request your preferred date.

You may dedicate the flowers in honor or memory of someone.

The cost is \$30. Church staff place the order and handle the details.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Save the Date - February 28

Church of the Dunes to Host BOGO Coffee Date at Kenzie's Be Cafe

As an outreach to the community, Church of the Dunes is making plans to sponsor and host a BOGO coffee date at Kenzie's Be Café in East Town, Grand Haven on February 28. On that day, during the café's regular hours, members and volunteers from Church of the Dunes will be on hand to offer customers a coupon for a free brewed coffee with any beverage purchase. This effort supports the café by bringing in as many as we can from Church of the Dunes to purchase a café beverage and maybe a tasty treat too, and creates an opportunity to buy a cup of coffee for folks from the community and maybe chat with them for a minute about why we like this church so much.



Kenzie's Be Café is a bright, fresh, and cozy coffee shop that provides meaningful employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If you've already been there, you know what a jewel of the community it is. Kenzie Be's is operated by a non-profit organization that "believes that there is a place for everyone in the workforce. While we provide employment our goal is to provide job skills and life skills training so that our BEristas are able to find further employment within our community."

For now, please save the date, February 28, to volunteer to help, or just stop in for café beverage and maybe a muffin or sandwich wrap from the case of tasty ready-made breakfast and lunch items. Watch for more information in the coming weeks.

CRAFTING AND CONNECTING

Sew with Craft Circle in January

Ann Antaya, Church of the Dunes Craft Circle

Craft Circle launches the new year with a sewing bee. We will meet Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2, on the lower level of the church. We are sewing items for Hope House. If you have a portable sewing machine to bring along, please do. For those not using a machine, there will be many other tasks.



Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at 10:00 a.m. Drop-ins are always welcome. There is no membership list, no sign-up sheet and no dues. Typically, we either have a project to work on or a guest speaker. We always have a snack. We always have laughter, fellowship and a good time. We would like to share it with you.



Worship Arts Ministry: Notes from the Loft

By Megan Horist, Director of Worship Arts
January 2025

Happy New Year!

We have so much to be thankful for at Church of the Dunes. I am reminded to thank God for each of you as I am counting my blessings. The Chancel Choir, Bells of Glory, Guitar Club, Tech Team, staff, ushers, Worship Team, liturgists, communion preparers and servers, acolytes, and so many extra musicians all come together to make the worship experience at the Dunes amazing. If any of these is you, thank you! We are all so blessed to be part of such a vibrant worship experience each Sunday morning. I am so thankful for all the extra things happening at the Dunes as well. From our Dunes Concert Series, to Bible studies and small groups, knitters and craft groups, to pickleball and chair yoga on several days of the week, this is a wonderful place to live and serve!

We had beautiful RESTORE worship experiences through Advent, and on Christmas Eve. If you missed any of our worship services please check them out on the church YouTube channel. You can find us by searching for "Dunes Church" on YouTube. It's a great way to stay connected with worship at the Dunes.

I hope to see you in church soon!
Megan

COMING UP IN WORSHIP

- JANUARY 05— **Wesley's Covenant Renewal**
Communion
Sunday

- JANUARY 12— **Epiphany Sunday**
Star Gifts
in worship
T **Treble Ensemble**

- JANUARY 19— **Chancel Choir**
in worship

- JANUARY 26— **Bells of Glory**
in worship
Mission Moment
Church of the Dunes Prayer
Shawl/Knitting
Group



YOU CROWN THE YEAR
WITH YOUR GOODNESS,
AND RICHNESS OVERFLOWS
WHEREVER YOU ARE.

Psalms 65:11



Grow in Faith

January Bible Studies and Book Discussion Groups

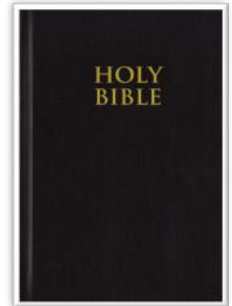
This month's line-up includes two classes led by Pastor Lou. Information about these and additional opportunities for growing in faith are provided below.

Reading the Bible Together

Mondays, 11:00 a.m., one hour, begins January 13

Pastor Lou, facilitator

Bring your Bible and join in as we read - and discuss - together. Pastor Lou will lead these class sessions throughout the winter and spring. Attend every week or drop in as your schedule allows. No advance sign-up needed.



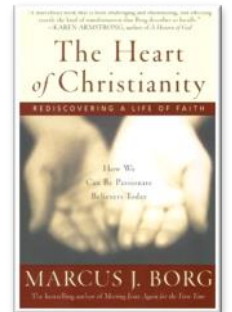
A Book Study with Pastor Lou "The Heart of Christianity"

by Marcus Borg

Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. – noon, meets 12 weeks, begins January 8

Pastor Lou, facilitator

Re-discover a life of faith as we explore what we believe as Christians about God and doing the "right things." The book offers insight into navigating challenging times as a Christian and a greater understanding of our love for God and God's love for us. Sign up on the Adult Education bulletin board, located near the church office. Books are available from Pastor Lou. Book fee is \$10. If the book fee is an obstacle, scholarships are available. Please read the introduction and chapter 1 for the first class session.



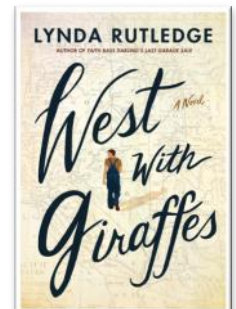
Fourth Monday Reading Group "West With Giraffes"

by Linda Rutledge

Monday, January 27, 1:30 p.m., at Panera Bread, Grand Haven

Gayle Cox, facilitator

"It's 1938. The Great Depression lingers. Hitler is threatening Europe, and world-weary Americans long for wonder. They find it in two giraffes who miraculously survive a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. What follows is a twelve-day road trip in a custom truck to deliver Southern California's first giraffes to the San Diego Zoo" To participate, get a copy of the book, read it, and join in the discussion.

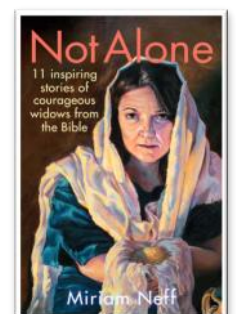


Not Alone—Eleven Courageous Widows from the Bible, Part 2

Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. begins January 7, meets 4 weeks, Room 2 lower level

Mary Anne Miller, Facilitator

Based on the book by Miriam Neff, this study for women especially speaks to those who have faced challenges on their own. This is a continuation of a study that began in September. If you did not participate in part 1, you are welcome to join in for part 2; please contact the facilitator through the church office ahead of time to arrange for any needed books or materials.



CHILDREN GROWING IN FAITH

Be Bold! In 2025

Jodie Freeman, Director of Family Ministries



It's the beginning of a new year, and we are looking forward to good things to come! Family Ministries continues to work on updating the classroom space and planning for growth.

For the month of December, in Sunday School, we explored Advent through scripture, music, and crafts. In January we will begin our new curriculum, "Be Bold." The class sessions include learning and adventure. The focus is on scriptures that teach us about acceptance of self and others, respect for other's thoughts and struggles, community, and God's incredible love for us.



Thank you to all who participated and helped with the Sunday Funday on December 15. It was wonderful to spend that time together having fun.

Watch for announcements of activities and events to come. There will be plenty of opportunities to engage and have some fun together!

You are special.

~ Fred Rogers ~



WINTER WEATHER CLOSING INFO

On normal school days, when Grand Haven Area Public Schools are closed due to winter weather conditions, Church of the Dunes is closed, and all activities are cancelled. Closing information is relayed to WoodTV 8*, and posted on the church's Facebook page.** On non-school days, our pastor determines if activities are cancelled. If a worship cancellation occurs due to winter weather conditions, church staff will convey the information to Wood TV8 to be included in its list of cancellations and closings.

While Sunday worship cancellations are not common, all are strongly encouraged to choose safety first if weather or road conditions are a concern. Remember, worship services are livestreamed for convenient access on [Church of the Dunes YouTube channel](#).

* Church staff are not able to control how long closing information remains posted on Wood TV.

** To find the church's Facebook page, log in to Facebook and search Church of the Dunes.

LIVING WELL IN THE SECOND HALF

Finishing Well Ministry in the New Year

Susan Thorpe, Coordinator, Finishing Well Ministry



Reflecting on the tumultuous year 2024, I am grateful for Pastor Lou and the Advent Series: Restore: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love that gave me a springboard of new attitudes, new goals, and perspective for 2025. We can all be better versions of ourselves in small ways that make big differences; whether it be spiritual, physical, emotional, or life-long learning. That is the essence of Finishing Well. Let's begin this year with hope, peace, joy, and love for ourselves and others!

January 2025 brings something new to Church of the Dunes. The Finishing Well Leadership Team will be taking orders for beautiful fleece outerwear garments, tote bags, and hats in many colors and embroidered with our UMC logo. Watch for the order table after church in the Wiltse Center every Sunday in January. Payment is cash or check only with delivery of items in February. This is a great way to share your faith in your community, with your friends and neighbors. It is also a conversation starter and segue into an invitation to Church of the Dunes!

For life-long learners, the *January Series*, put on by Calvin University, takes place January 20 – 31. Check out the speaker line-up, which is provided on page 11 of this newsletter, and at www.calvin.edu/January-series. You can experience all 10 one-hour-long presentations throughout the month at Second Christian Reformed Church, 2021 Sheldon Rd, Grand Haven, at 12:30 p.m. Coffee, water, and yummy cookies are provided, too! If you prefer, you can watch from home, online. A few of this year's topics are: *A Conversation on Learning to Disagree; Adventures Across the World and Around the Neighborhood; They Told Me I Couldn't Walk, So I Decided to Run*. I have been attending this series for several years and am never disappointed in new ideas and research going on in the world.

Also in January, on the 16th at 6:00 p.m., we are bringing a naturalist, George Jaeger, to Church of the Dunes to talk about *A Grand River*. This presentation will focus on the geology of the Grand and how intertwined it is with our culture both today and in the past. Experience the Grand River as a creative force influencing the landscape of Ottawa County in this "Earth Encounters Geology" program. We'll learn about sediments, deposition, and erosion as we look for the signatures of these in Ottawa county parks. The speaker is going to try to keep it to around one hour and will bring some visuals to set up for people to look at before and after the program. Please contact Susan Thorpe to *reserve your spot*. For assistance making that connection, contact the church office. Weather changes could impact this event so please note when Grand Haven Schools are closed due to winter weather conditions, the church is also closed.

Just a word on self-care in the New Year: As we age, we tend to pick up habits, phrases, thought patterns that can be negative. When we say "self-care," that covers a lot of ground so narrowing it down is what you will learn here. Self-care includes self-talk which is when we repeat thoughts and ideas and sometimes fears out loud. This is where we often get into the weeds, with statements like, "My memory is terrible lately," and "I can't remember things like I

continued on the next page

Finishing Well Ministry, continued from previous page

used to.” Phrases like these are negative, and it takes time to reverse those habits. Saying these types of phrases out loud does two things, it cements your attitude for the day, and your ears hear this and your brain processes the phrase and stores it in your memory. Pretty soon you and your brain believe that thought and begin to perpetuate that attitude. Plan this year to invent some positive alternatives for those negative phrases and start inserting positive thoughts into your day.

Happy New Year!

CONNECT AND GROW**Adult Ministries Update**

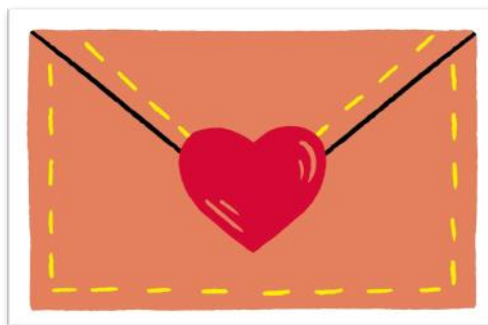
Susan Thorpe, Church of the Dunes Adult Ministries

Adult Ministries is geared toward a social model to keep our busy lives connected to our church friends and family; nothing fussy, just simple fun. Activities often includes food, but nothing fancy; making new friends, the easy way. At present, we are seeking someone or a team of persons to lead this group and gather ideas for this nothing-fussy group. If this might be you, contact me to discuss some details. (For assistance connecting with Susan, contact the church office.)

Church of the Dunes’ library is part of Adult Ministries, and you will be amazed at the high quality of book titles and genres. Check-out a book to read on a snowy day! The check-out system is self-service and easy to use.

Adult Education is part of Adult Ministries, which is a widely varied and educational series of Bible Studies. If this sounds daunting, you have it all wrong. The Bible studies often start with videos or small books. Sessions typically meet for 4-6 weeks, and you don’t need to know the books of the Bible by heart to find your way. If you are interested in learning more about the Bible, Jesus, or other curiosities, now is the time. Like me, you may never have attended a Bible study before joining Church of the Dunes. Learning something new is fun with a group of supportive and loving friends in Christ. Bible study dates and times are included in this newsletter and posted on the bulletin board located near the church office. Gayle Cox has just been selected as the Adult Education Lead and has some great ideas for 2025.

Care Cards are a mission of Adult Ministries as well. These are simply greeting cards with a Starbucks gift card tucked inside that are sent to our college students and active military service members to remind them that Church of the Dunes cares. If you have a child or grandchild that fits into these categories and would appreciate knowing they are loved, share their contact info with us by contacting Susan Thorpe to be added to this list in 2025. For assistance making the connection, contact the church office.



STEWARDING GIFTS

Planned Giving and Memorial Fund Committee 2024 Year in Review

Robert Mann, Chair, Planned Giving and Memorial Fund Committee

As we enter a New Year, it is a good time to reflect on progress and activities, and to look forward to furthering God's work in our church and community. The overall summary of 2024 will be included in a formal report available at the end of January. In the meantime, I'd like to share some of the highlights of the year.

Our Dunes Concert Series is well underway, providing free concerts with a variety of music to our community. These are made possible by a generous and ongoing memorial gift honoring one of our members, and have been very well received. Memorial gifts have been at work providing some more comfortable and functional chairs for the choir, in addition to supporting several projects earlier in the year – banner lifting equipment, Zoom carts, signage, high-top tables, and safe bags. As previously advised, another three Education Grants were also approved in the past year.

On the Planned Giving side, an allocation of Endowment Fund income was just approved to support elements of a new creative ministry which will be starting shortly. The Endowment Fund structure enables perpetual gifts from the fund's interest/income - derived from investment of principal at the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan (UMF). In recent years, several members and friends have presented interesting questions for discussion regarding opportunities for gifts in support of our church, both now – Living Gifts – as well as bequests from their estates. Additionally, some members have indicated the desire for more immediate impact for a potentially higher percentage of their gift over a broad range projects and activities. This has led to discussions within the Planned Giving Committee and with the United Methodist Foundation, and a presentation to Church Council. I am pleased to report that we are setting up a new unrestricted fund at the UMF which will be a Current Use Flexible Fund, providing another option for gifts in support of our church. The Endowment and Memorial Funds will remain as they are, enabling perpetual gifts via endowed funds and memorial gifts honoring loved ones who have passed away. Those wishing to give to the new flexible fund will be asked to give guidance on designation and use, and a timeframe over which the gift is intended to be used or provide support. No doubt there will be questions, so please contact me via the church office. I am happy to help.

Your ongoing support to our church is always appreciated and gratefully received.

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

~ Thomas O. Chisholm ~



The January Series - Live Simulcasts in Grand Haven

January 20 - 31, 2025

Second Christian Reformed Church, 2021 Sheldon (at Robbins Road)

Experience the words and ideas of inspiring leaders, creators, writers, adventurers, and athletes, right here in Grand Haven at Second Christian Reformed Church. Grand Rapids-based Calvin University's "The January Series" has become so popular it is now simulcast in many places throughout Michigan, in fifteen other states, and in Canada. These free presentations are from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. and are open to the public. For more info: <https://calvin.edu/january-series/speakers>.

Monday, January 20

Jonathan Eig, Pulitzer Prize Winning Author

"King: A Life"

Tuesday, January 21

Todd Komarnicki, Movie Producer, Writer, Director

"Bravery: A Story of 'Elf,' 'Sully,' and 'Bonhoeffer'"

Wednesday, January 22

John Inazu, Author and Scholar

"A Conversation on Learning to Disagree"

Thursday, January 23

Heather Templeton Dill, Philanthropist

"Philanthropies Impact on our Communities"

Friday, January 24

Kristjan Prikk, Estonia's Ambassador to the US

"The Future of Europe—Should it Still Matter to America"

Monday, January 27

Peter Sagal, Radio Humorist, Host of "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me"

"Front Seat at the Sideshow. What I've Learned After 25 Yrs of Making Fun of Everything"

Tuesday, January 28

Alastair Humphreys, Adventurer

"Adventures Across the World and Around the Neighborhood"

Wednesday, January 29

Reshma Saujani, Writer, Advocate, TED Talk Speaker

"A Conversation on Pay Up and Brave, Not Perfect"

Thursday, January 30

Michaela O'Donnell, Leadership Director, Seminary Professor

"Life in Flux"

Friday, January 31

Hunter Woodhall, Paralympic Gold Medalist

"They Told Me I Couldn't Walk, So I Decided to Run"