With this strange environment that now makes us two congregations of ‘shut-ins’, we’re striving to establish a regular communication via our Newsletter format. Included in this issue is a letter from Pastor Nancy.

SHAFTSBURGUMC@WEEBLY.COM https://www.facebook.com/perrymiumc/ www.perryumc.weebly.com

Pastor Ellen’s Contemplations

They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:34-35 NRS)

This week’s sermon will be about the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35) In my message (spoiler alert!) I speak about how an encounter with the Risen Christ often comes when we are not at all expecting it, and it comes as we share ourselves and our hospitality with others.

As I continue thinking about that familiar story, and you may begin again to think about it if you haven’t been reading it lately, I wonder whether we often acknowledge and celebrate those moments of recognition in communities of faith? Do we share those experiences with others, even others in our church, or do we keep those experiences close to our hearts, worried others might think we are weird, crazy or otherwise too ________________ (you fill in the blank). Are we too stoic and shy even within our church family to share those experiences, much less with people who are not in church with us? Would we run to tell our friends?

I don’t know if I would or not. I might tell since I am now a pastor, but for the first 50 years of my life I wasn’t a pastor and I might not have told. Or, if I did tell, it would have been to a select audience of confirmed believers. I am not proudly writing this; it is just the sad fact.

As we get a glimpse of hope that we might be able to meet together again in the somewhat near future, I want to offer some homework for you all. Take a time to think about when you might have had an encounter with Christ that assured you of his presence. Write it up so that you have a succinct story to tell. I hope that you can share it with your family and friends, and I invite you to share some of your stories on the pages of this newsletter or even in church when we are back together. If the encounters are during this time of social distancing, great! If they were at some other time, that is great too. They are your stories and your encounters, and I urge you to share them, because in the sharing I know that others will be blessed to see the Risen Christ at work in their lives

Pastor Ellen

Contact Information:
Cell Phone - 517-515-9500
Email - ekzienert@gmail.com
Address: 517 W. Shiawassee Street, Lansing, MI 48933
Jesus Is With Us
Based on Luke 24:13–25

One day, two people were walking along a road. They were going from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus. They were very sad because their dear friend, Jesus, had died. They missed him very much.

Soon someone came to walk beside them. As they all walked together, the person asked, “Why are you sad?” The two friends said, “Our good friend Jesus has died. We miss him so much.”

As they walked down the road together, the person told the two friends many stories about God. And the two friends listened and listened. When they arrived in the town of Emmaus, the two friends said, “Please come to our house and stay with us.”

When they sat at the table, their guest took the bread, said a prayer and broke the bread just like Jesus used to do. The friends looked at each other in amazement, “Jesus lives on,” they said at the same time.

The two friends were so excited they had to tell everyone the good news. They didn’t care that it was almost dark. They didn’t care that they had just walked a long way. They jumped up from the table and ran out, all the way back to Jerusalem. “Alleluia! Alleluia! Jesus is still with us,” they shouted to everyone who would listen.
The Road to Emmaus

The two friends were so excited they went back to Jerusalem telling everyone who would listen, “Jesus is still with us.”
Worship Service April 26, 2020
The video of this service available on our two websites and PUMC’s Facebook page

Perry and Shaftsbury United Methodist Churches
Order of Worship
April 26, 2020

Call to Worship
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-14-19 (paraphrased)
One: I love God, because my cries and pleadings have been heard. Because God enfolded me in love and respect,
All: I will remain open in heart until the end of my days.
One: The confines of death surrounded me; the deep chill of hell entombed me. I knew what real anguish and
pain was like.
All: So I cried out, “Save my life, O God, come to my side.”
One: What, then, can I do to repay such kindness?
All: I will drink from the wells of compassion. In the presence of all I will express the gratitude of my soul.
As you listen consider: where are the places where we especially feel Christ closest to us?
Litany (Based on Luke 24:13-35)
One: Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.
All: We love because God first loved us.
One: On the road to Emmaus the travelers did not realize the blessing that was in their midst and travelling with
them. God blesses us unexpectedly, and in ways we cannot imagine.
All: The impossible is possible with God.
One: He broke bread amongst them and then their eyes saw the gift that had been with them on the road to Em-
maus. God’s blessings are all around us as God-presence always.
Hymn: O Thou Who This Mysterious Bread, UMH #613, verses 1 & 2
Message: Breaking Bread
Prayer Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer
Announcements
Closing Hymn: How Firm a Foundation, UMH #529, verses 1, 2, 5
Benediction

Officiant: Rev. Ellen K. Zienert
Organist: Shirley Tobias
Tech Assistants: Emma Baker and Mario Carrill

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Jesus offered himself to Cleopas and his companion, perhaps Mrs. Cleopas. (Who knows?) Cleopas and his companion were walking along, heads down, heading home after the terrifying days in Jerusalem. They were sad and (I imagine) trying to make sense of all that had happened. They were on the road of heartbreak and had been for a while. During these days of pandemic, many of us have felt lost and alone, wondering if God has a clue about what is around the bend, haven't we?

Perhaps Cleopas and his companion could not see Jesus was there with them because they were blinded by their own distress, their own certainty that Jesus was dead. Did their wounded hearts cause their eyes to be blinded? Perhaps we can see our own reflections in their story – our own steps away from an unrecognized and unacknowledged resurrection? What should we do when we have reached our wits end, when we feel that all is washed away, physically, spiritually, emotionally, or financially? We look at the pews, empty today, we look around and ask, “where has Christ gone? Where is the Spirit?”

Cleopas and his companion hurry home as the day comes to an end. A stranger comes up to them. The stranger asks them what they are talking about; he stops them in their tracks. When God comes upon us, the story seems to say, we come to a stop. We must surely be at a crossroads. We must stop our frenetic, pained forward motion; stop and consider what is right in front of us.

Mr. and Mrs. Cleopas saw Jesus as a stranger. In some ways Jesus was challenging them to show him hospitality. They practice philoxenia, which literally means "love of the stranger." Philoxenia is one of the Greek words used in the New Testament for hospitality. This word is the opposite of a word we do know, a word sadly too prevalent in society today -- xenophobia, "fear of the stranger."

But at the moment of confrontation, the disciple’s hearts begin to change. This is a story about changing hearts. This is a heart-felt transformation. The divine stranger offers a story; reminds them (and us, those who are listening in) of God’s own interpretation of suffering, death, and resurrection. Through this sacred teaching, their hearts were warmed, their faith rekindled. God is confronting them with a new reality – it is a sacred moment, a sacred space, a holy challenge to their notions of what is possible.
Even though they still didn’t recognize Jesus, as they reached their destination, they knew they didn’t want the stranger to leave. “Come – be our guest for dinner,” they implored. As one commentator said, “The hospitality of the travelling companions becomes the doorway to grace.”1 Think of that – hospitality becomes the doorway to grace. Do we often think of our own offerings of hospitality as a chance to receive grace, a holy blessing, not simply offer it?

The road to Emmaus is a heart-centered story of grace. It offers us a model of the way that the resurrected Christ can come to us when we are hopeless and alone. This story offers us life and hope, bringing us the promise of resurrection and new life. It is promise so outlandish, so desperately necessary, that it has always prompted doubt.

Resurrection makes all the difference between seeing the Scriptures as accounts of things that happened but are not happening anymore, and accounts of things that happened and marvelously continue to happen to us because God lives in and with us. Where there is life, there is God and where there is God, there is life. The Road to Emmaus is our story – our story of wearily walking away in despair encountering the Risen Christ on our walk and receiving hope and grace for the way ahead.

Cleopas and his companion have welcomed the stranger as a guest. As they break bread together, the revelation of who Jesus is and what his death and resurrection mean comes to them. God created a sacred space where hospitality nurtured understanding and true community was formed.

Jesus vanished when they fully recognized him; their hearts were fully transformed. Revelation is not coercion and Jesus has left to allow them the space to accept what he has given them – or not.

Mr. and Mrs. Cleopas hurried back to Jerusalem to joyfully join their friends and share their news. Scripture is best understood in and with community. The weary travelers felt their hearts come alive and went to share the news. News this transformational must be shared! Those whose hearts have been touched by the grace of God feel compelled to reach out to offer the bread of life so that others too may come to know the risen Christ.

The Emmaus story is our story. Faithful and broken, coming together, virtually now, as a community to worship the Lord, our hearts are shaped in the sharing of Scripture and the study of the word. Blessing, sharing and breaking bread together, living together, that is what forms us in our faith journey. While our togetherness is different at the moment, still we are together in Spirit. Think about the ways you might be able to share the good news with others in this time of sheltering – perhaps in new and surprising ways.

Jesus models for us a way to do a better job of welcoming and including people in the life of the church; he offers guidance for those who wish to share his love with the world.

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Jesus calls us to the practice of philoxenia -- love of the stranger. When we practice it, we discover that strangers really aren't so strange, are they?

Jesus wants us to take care of the guests who come to us and to seek our those who need the touch of his love in their lives. He challenges us to feed the hungry and welcome outcasts as he did throughout his ministry. Since we, the people of the church, are the physical body of Christ in the world today, we're supposed to be his hands and continue his work. We show his presence in the world every time we practice hospitality in his name, whether we're feeding the hungry by bringing food for the food pantry, bringing coins for missions, or welcoming a guest to a service of worship.

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (vv. 37-40).

How might you share Jesus’ love with someone this week – whether with time or food or in another way? Perhaps you can write a note to someone, thanking them for the care and love they have offered you. Sharing can be tougher to do perhaps in these times of pandemic, but it is always possible to share God’s love.

In remembering Emmaus, we come together and strengthen our bonds with Jesus and with each other. When we live out our faith, sharing Jesus the Christ through worship, prayer, study, and service we are personifying the Emmaus story. We become the disciples Jesus met along the road.

May our hearts today be warmed through our encounters with the grace and love the risen Christ!

Amen.
Prayer Concerns

**Joys:** George & Bonnie Dunn are celebrating the birth of another great grandson, Layne Clark Haas. Congratulations!

**Concerns:** Roxane Benjamin for unspoken prayers; Arden DeZess for cardiac testing due to chest pain.

Items to consider

**Tithing**
We’d like to thank you for continuing to send in your tithes during this unusual time of social distancing and quarantine. Please mail them to: Carol Nama, 7870 Beardslee Road, Owosso, MI 48867.

**Improved Communication**
The PUMC website has been updated, so be sure to check it out! We now have two forms of communication: our Facebook page found at [www.facebook.com/perrymiumc/](http://www.facebook.com/perrymiumc/), as well as our website at [www.perryumc.weebly.com](http://www.perryumc.weebly.com). Both sites will feature Pastor Ellen’s devotionals and on-line Sunday services.

**PUMC Newsletter Items**
If you have joys or concerns to share, news items, etc. for the weekly newsletter, please send them to Shelly Nyquist at shelly.nyquist@gmail.com, or call her at 517-285-5514.

**Help Wanted** (for) Sunday Bulletin:
Jan Luft has been responsible for the weekly Sunday church bulletin for a long time, and desires to hand over the responsibility to another person. Currently, the procedure involves receiving an electronic file from the pastor each week, usually by Wednesday at 5 p.m., and copying it for Sunday service (on the church's copy machine). Additional responsibilities include finding an appropriate image for the front page of the bulletin, based off that week’s Bible readings and sermon title, and adding any announcements forwarded to you for inclusion. There is optional participation on the Worship Committee, in order to stay informed of upcoming service details. Worship Committee meets the 2nd Monday of each month at 5 p.m.
This job will begin when regular activities resume. Associated procedures may be subject to change with the new pastor. If interested or have questions, please contact Carol Nama (namacnn@gmail.com) or Shelly Nyquist (shelly.nyquist@gmail.com). It’s an important task, involves fun fellowship, and is a great way to get involved.
Shaftsburg Sharing

On-line Giving:

Prayer Concerns: None this week

Items to consider

Assuming we will all be required to wear face masks when we resume church services in the building together.....

Jessica (Sue’s daughter) is making face masks for those who need them and that our church family could contact Sue if they need one, She will relay the message to Jessica who lives in Iowa so would mail it. I will need mailing address. No charge.

Sue Hammond 517-202-5507 call or text or SueHammond51@gmail.com.
Re-opening strategies being pondered

Bishop Bard and conference leaders are considering strategies to equip local churches for returning to in-person activities when the state gives the signal.

*When will Michigan return to normal operation? That remains uncertain. But the Bishop and leaders of The Michigan Conference are creating strategies to help churches prepare to resume in-person activities.*

April 21, 2020 | LANSING, Michigan – Michigan has the third-highest death-count of COVID-19 in the United States. As the state continues to struggle to control infections and deaths from the virus, Bishop Bard and conference leaders are in discussion on how to re-open local churches once State Health Officials signal it is safe to do so.

The Michigan Conference has followed the Executive Order from Governor Gretchen Whitmer, based on the advice of state and federal health experts. Congregations are encouraged not to worship in person until at least April 30th. It is unclear if the Governor’s order will be extended or if a phased state re-opening might begin on May 1st.

According to health experts, the challenge of opening local churches is that they serve large numbers of highly vulnerable populations. Re-opening too early risks reigniting COVID-19 infections and returning the state back to where it was weeks ago.

While health officials ponder the best way to return the state to some form of normal operation, Michigan Conference leaders are discussing protocols that would prepare local churches to return to in-person worship in a manner that would minimize risk. These guidelines are expected to include recommendations on safe-distancing, good hygiene, and other ways of protecting those in worship.

Conference leaders continue efforts to provide ongoing strategies for keeping churches vital while a vaccine and effective treatments are developed. Bishop Bard is still encouraging local churches to create effective ways of worshipping online and maintaining ministries through online giving. He also emphasizes the importance of engaging and supporting members of local churches who are without internet technology.

Timelines for opening the state are uncertain. Vital congregations are those that invest in long-term strategies for active involvement with their communities.
Local Resource Assistance

IS COVID-19 PUTTING YOU IN A SITUATION YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN IN BEFORE?

WORRIED? STRESSED? ANXIOUS?

ESSENTIAL NEEDS HOTLINE
989-743-2460

EXPERIENCING OR IN NEED OF SUPPORT FOR:
- Feelings of isolation and loneliness
- Panic or anxiety over the possibility of getting sick, financial struggles, or lack of resources
- Are sick at home, or caring for a sick family member and dealing with fear, anxiety, depression
- Support for first responders, essential employees, medical professionals on the front lines of the Coronavirus situation experiencing burnout, anxiety, depression and feeling overwhelmed
- Anyone who could use someone to talk to during this difficult time

Available 24/7
(989)723-6791

Mental Health Needs Call (989)723-6791
Essential Needs Call (989)743-2460

SHIAWASSEE Health & Wellness
SHIAWASSEE COUNTY Health Department

Food, Transportation, Housing Issues, Help with Payments While Waiting for Unemployment Benefits and More!