

The Parish Visitor

July 2024



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A Fierce Loyalty

On Monday, July 1 will reach a special milestone in my life because I will mark my 30th anniversary as a United Methodist pastor. Over the past thirty years, I've been privileged to serve eleven churches, including seven of them at the same time. Also on July 1, I will begin my fifth year as your pastor, as Bishop Frank Beard has reappointed me to Aledo UMC, something for which I am most grateful.

A while back I came across a meme which I reposted on my Facebook page. It reads, **“You must always be willing to truly consider evidence that contradicts your beliefs and admit the possibility that you may be wrong. Intelligence isn't knowing everything; it's the ability to challenge everything you know.”** That pretty well sums up my journey as a pastor, especially given the fact that I spent fourteen years as a pastor in a fundamentalist denomination. Despite the fundamentalism of my former denomination, I received an excellent education at North Central Bible College in Minneapolis where I earned my bachelor's degree in Bible and Pastoral Care. Much of what I believe and practice today harkens back to that education. Nonetheless, by 1993 I knew that I was in the wrong denomination, and I began looking for other faith communities. By that fall, I had begun the process of transferring into the United Methodist Church. Nonetheless, it was hard to leave my former denomination because I had been loyal to it for so long.

I like to think of myself as a life-long learner. However, being a life-long learner has nothing to do with one's education. I know educated people who are still ignorant; you probably know a few, too. Being a life-long learner is about approaching life with curiosity and a willingness to listen. And as a pastor, it means approaching the scriptures with curiosity and an attentive ear.

When I transferred into the UMC, I needed to pursue a Master of Divinity. I began my studies at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and concluded them at McCormick Theological Seminary. I can truly say that during that course of study, I experienced everything in the meme above. The only thing that helped me was my curiosity and my willingness to listen to the stories of other students, professors, and authors. Sometimes I disagreed with them, but I listened anyway. As James tells us, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (1:19).

(continued on page 2)

SPECIAL DATES:

- July 2 Loving Hands Food Prep 1PM
- July 4 Office Closed for Independence Day Holiday
- July 8 Serve Lunch to Fair Workers noon
- July 11 Caring Hearts Food Prep 9AM
- July 13 UMW Fellowship Serves Pork Chops at Mercer market 10:30AM-1PM
- July 15-19 VBS 5PM -7:45PM
- July 19 Parish Visitor Deadline 8AM
- July 21 Trustees Meeting 6PM
- July 21 Finance Meeting 6:45PM
- July 21 Administrative Council Meeting 7:30PM
- July 21-26 Youth Mission Trip
- July 22 United Methodist Men Meeting 6PM
- July 25 Caring Hearts Food Prep 1PM
- July 30 Loving Hands Food Prep 1PM

(continued from page 1)

In October 2016, I attended the first meeting of the Wesleyan Covenant Association in Rosemont, and it was obvious that the WCA was laying the groundwork for a new Methodist denomination to be created by splintering the United Methodist Church. I wanted no part of that. I was a broken pastor when I came into the UMC in 1994. Thankfully, the United Methodist Church accepted me, bruises and all. My fierce loyalty which made it so hard to leave my former denomination now means that I will never leave the UMC.

I did, however, find something valuable at that first meeting of the Wesley Covenant Association. I found a display for the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary where they were promoting their Doctor of Ministry program. I sensed the nudge of the Holy Spirit, applied to the program, and four years later earned my Doctor of Ministry, and in the process, once again, I experienced everything expressed in the above meme.

One might assume that every faith community would prize curiosity, but that's not always true. In some Christian circles, curiosity is discouraged because everything has already been settled in the scriptures because "the Bible says so." But the Bible says lots of things. The Bible is a collection of stories, biographies, poems, prophecies, letters, and more. But it's not a systematic theology. Without a doubt, there are some things in the Bible which are settled; most of them are summarized nicely in the Apostle's Creed. But the real brilliance of the scriptures is not that they tell you *what* to think; rather, it's that the scriptures *make* you think. And that requires us to approach the Word with curiosity and a willingness to listen to its words.

I hope you're curious about the Word of God. If you are, I hope you'll join me on this journey of curiosity and learning as we continue to dive into the greatest book ever written. At times, the Bible will disturb you. At other times, it will challenge you. But always it will make you think. And as you are challenged and think, so may you grow in the knowledge and the grace of God.

Connecting People to Jesus Christ with you,

Pastor Dave

Connecting with the Word

As believers in Christ, we are shaped by the Word of God. Following are the scriptures suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary for each week in June. I encourage you to read these passages to prepare your hearts for worship, whether in-person, on the radio, on Facebook, or on our church website, Myaledoumc.com.

Sunday, July 7: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; and Mark 6:1-13. Holy Communion will be served.

Sunday, July 14: 2 Samuel 6:1-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; and Mark 6:14-29.

Sunday, July 21: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89; Ephesians 2:11-12; and Mark 6:30-34, 53-56.

Sunday, July 28: 2 Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 14; Ephesians 3:14-21; and John 6:1-21

Brown Bag Stories: Since we do not offer children's Sunday school during the summer, Pastor Dave will be sharing one of his Brown Bag stories during all three services as children are present. Because we exist to connect *children* to Jesus Christ.

Also, on July 14-28, Children's Church will be offered following the Brown Bag Story, and it will be held in the education wing. Children's Church is not offered on July 7 because we want our children to be able to receive Holy Communion.

Connecting People to Christ with you,

Pastor Dave

Help Grow Our Endowment

As pastor, one of my goals for Aledo UMC is to help ensure its future success. One of the ways to do that is by encouraging our friends and members to remember our endowment in your estate planning. We have had an endowment for years, and a couple of years ago we changed how it functions. Today the principle of our endowment is invested with the purpose of creating income for the church by earning interest for the church. Last year, we received our first proceeds check of \$2,100. Imagine what we could do if we grew our endowment to \$1 million dollars. At a modest interest rate of just 4%, \$1 million would generate \$40,000 for the church every year until Christ returns.

Financial planners are often critical of families who are living paycheck to paycheck. What about churches that live Sunday offering to Sunday offering? Proceeds from an endowment would help us break that cycle.

Endowments are used extensively by many not-for-profit agencies and every week I receive solicitations to remember one ministry or another in my will. You probably receive those solicitations as well. Honestly, we would not be doing our job if we did not give you the opportunity to remember Aledo UMC in your estate planning. Why not consider remembering the church with a “Final Tithe” in your estate planning.

Endowment balances are reported to our Conference every year and are published in our Conference Journal. A quick survey of our most recent (2023 Journal for year ending 2022) revealed that 52 United Methodist Churches in our Conference have \$1 million or more in cash assets. We would be in good company with a \$1 million endowment.

We will never “pass the plate” to collect funds for our endowment. Rather, we hope to grow the endowment as Aledo UMC is included in estate plans, life insurance policies, and memorials. But you’ll have to make those arrangements with your lawyer, your financial planner, and your family.

Pastor Dave



THE FORGE

WHERE LIVES TAKE SHAPE

FORGE, OUR YOUTH FELLOWSHIP FOR GRADES 6 THROUGH 12, will meet twice this July:

- 6 pm on Sunday, July 7
- Noon on Sunday, July 14. Please text Pastor Dave by Saturday, July 13, so he can get a count for pizza.

YOUTH MISSION TRIP, Sunday evening through Thursday evening at Camp Milan.



Pastor Dave will give the “Thought for the Day” on WRMJ at 9AM Monday through Friday beginning Monday, July 1.

Our July Volunteer of the Month Is Nancy Robinson

Our July Volunteer of the Month is organized, demonstrates good leadership skills, congenial, willing to assist in any project, good communicator, and always finishes strong. If you are wondering who the volunteer that is being described here is, it is Nancy Robinson.

The same gifts that Nancy employed during her many years of being an educator, principal, and department chair of special education are being utilized here at AUMC. Nancy was the chair of the Capital Campaign Committee. If you wanted to know what some of the decisions this group made, you don't have to look any farther than our sanctuary with its beautiful stain glass windows and open space where the organ was. Nancy has also been an integral part of the trustees volunteering for projects such as replacing the doors of the Education Wing and working with the "Rebuild the Wall" contractor. She has cleaned, painted, and moved things around in the Christmas room. Whatever the job, one knows that if Nancy is a part of it, it will be well executed.



Being a core member of the Rhubarb Fest committee is another place where Nancy has stepped up to help. She baked many pies at home and at the church as well as helped with other preparations. Nancy has helped out as a substitute usher and is also a frequent greeter for Sunday services. She also helped with the beautification of the Education Wing where classroom and bathrooms were painted and decorated. There are many projects and positions that you can see that Nancy has volunteered for.

An accomplished seamstress and in her spare time, Nancy has made many beautiful items for the Christmas Marketplace. She also creates lovely quilts and has donated some to Cunningham Children's home. The residents surely appreciate the love and detail that she puts into her work.

Nancy has been a faithful member of The Aledo United Methodist Church. Her willingness to help us fulfill our mission "to connect people to Jesus Christ" is evident in all the things that she participates in. We are grateful to have Nancy as part of our AUMC family.

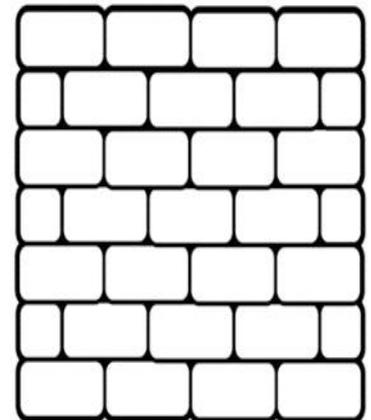
Rebuild the Wall

Work has been completed in a third-floor storeroom where we keep our seasonal decorations. Four old stained-glass windows were removed, and the opening was bricked in. This will not only reverse the damage to the north side of our building, but it will also save energy.

Cost for this phase of our Rebuild the Wall project is \$12,800, and as of June 23, we have received \$8,573. toward this most necessary project. Proceeds from our June 30 Fifth Sunday fellowship dinner will be directed to this campaign but are not included in these totals. We hope to wrap up this campaign this month.

If you would like to give toward this project above and beyond your regular tithes and offerings, please make your check payable to AUMC and indicate it is for "Rebuild the Wall."

This was the second phase of an ongoing project to keep our church in good repair for our ongoing ministry to our community and beyond. There will be future phases added as we will strive to address our needs in manageable "bites."





**The Aledo United Methodist
Church**
301 N. College Ave
Aledo , IL 61231
Phone (309) 582-2169
Website: myaledoumc.com

**AUMC would like to invite all children
 age 5 (or have completed Pre K) through those who have completed grade-5 to
 Our Evening Vacation Bible School (VBS)
 “Camp Firelight”
 On July 15-19, 2024
 Class Time: 5:30—7:45 p.m.**

Light Meal (optional): 5 p.m. We are providing a meal before VBS for parents and children.

Register Online: umcaledoil.mycokesburyvbs.com

*****Friday Night, June 19 is Family Fun Night***
 Parents and Families are invited to stay , enjoy a light meal, and
 participate in activities with their children.**

**Questions?-Contact Ashlie Dellitt Fuller
 (563)505-9610**

We are hiring!

Aledo United Methodist Church is currently hiring a church office manager. Duties include managing the church office, answering phone calls, screening requests, and assisting church and community members. A complete list of responsibilities is available in the church office Monday-Friday, 8AM to noon.

Qualified applicants will be committed to the mission of the church, which is to connect people to Jesus Christ. In addition, applicants will need to have the ability to maintain confidentiality while being friendly, punctual, and above reproach. Previous experience with Microsoft Office Suite is required as well as the availability to attend staff meetings (currently Tuesday mornings). Previous customer service, administrative assistant, or office coordinator experience and basic accounting skills are preferred. Qualified applicants should present their resume, cover letter and a minimum of 2 references to the church office C/O Pastor Dave Schultz. The successful candidate will be required to pass a background check.

Sponsors for our July Radio Broadcasts

July 7– Paul & Mary Flint, Philippians 4:13

July 14– Jon & Chris Swanson

July 21– Kathy Jenkins, “Believe all things are possible with God”

July 28 – anonymous

Aledo UMC has a wonderful ministry partnership with WRMJ Radio 102.3 FM. Our services are now broadcast every Sunday at 5:10 pm, thanks to your sponsorship.

We encourage you to download the WRMJ app so you can listen to our broadcast live on your smartphone, tablet, or computer. The app is available free at your app store.



WRMJ RADIO BROADCAST.

We need sponsors starting in August!

Each Sunday at 5:10PM we broadcast our 8am Worship Service on WRMJ. Would you like to sponsor this? It costs \$30 to sponsor a Sunday broadcast, and is a wonderful way to get our Services out to the public and to those who cannot make it out to church. If you are interested, let the office know at 582-2169. If you would like to sponsor in memory of a loved one, give us the information and we will acknowledge it in the bulletin and in the announcements.

Rhubarb Fest News

Aledo United Methodist Church, we did it again! We very successfully ran our Rhubarb Fest lunches for two days, selling 683 meals and using/selling 312 pies. What an accomplishment for our congregation!

Our members are simply the best. I heard so many favorable comments all weekend from people living in Aledo and from those living far away.

Just a few of the comments shared with me were:

“Your pies are simply the best.”

“I come here every year to eat lunch and to buy my pie.”

“The chicken salad and potato salad are wonderful!”

“Your kids were GREAT servers, polite and efficient.”

“Everyone was so friendly and kind.”

“Our congregation could never do this. We don’t have the people.”

So, thanks to all of you for contributing in whatever way you could. It takes each and every one of us to truly “Connect People to Jesus Christ” with our lunches. Go, rhubarb!



Mary Flint

Hy-Vee Baked Product Schedule

Our HyVee bread and many other goodies are delivered on Saturday morning. They are available for you to pick up in the Fellowship Café area when you come to Church Services on Sunday morning. The bread is in the lobby outside the church office on Monday morning 8–9AM for you to select bread products for your neighbors and yourself.



Aledo UMC offers two Bible Studies for Men

- **Men's Bible Study every Wednesday Morning at 6:30AM**. Come for breakfast and a time of studying God's Word. The men are currently studying James.
- **Saturday 8-9:15AM Men's Bible Study**. Meets once a month. In July, we will meet on July 13th.

Thank You!

Thank you for hosting your Rice Meal Pack. I hope this benefits your congregation as much as it will benefit those who receive the Rice Meals.

*Midwest Mission
Distribution Center*

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

Our Tuesday morning Bible Study is taking a break this July. However, there are two opportunities for you to become a "loominary" (see page 12). We will hit the books again beginning Tuesday, August 6 as we preview, "God Relents," a project by Pastor Dave. Studies begin at 9 am and open to all who are curious about God.

Come ring with us!

If you're looking for a creative way to connect people to Jesus Christ, why not join our bell choir? The ringers have lots of fun together and you will be blessed by the fellowship as well as being a part of the music. Please contact Nicole Taylor for more information.



Our Mission Team will be serving their annual noon meal for the Mercer County Fair carnival workers as they set up on Monday, July 8th. This is just another way to Connect People to Jesus Christ.

The United Methodist Men will meet on Monday, July 22nd at 6PM in the church dining room. There will be a meal, a short business meeting, and lots of fellowship. Join us, and bring a friend!



JULY ANNIVERSARIES

07/05/1997– Bill & Brooke Fleuette
 07/07/1978– Jerry & Joan Luxmore
 07/07/2008– Brian & Dixie Wieskamp
 07/09/1977– Paul & Mary Flint
 07/12/1959– Tom & JeAnne Balmer
 07/12/2014– Pete & Natalie Nelson
 07/14/2018– Chris & Amanda Leng
 07/25/1969– Randy & Laura McGinnis



UM Women Golden Age Birthdays

07/07– Glenda Foy
 07/08– Carole Schmidt
 07/17– Jenni Maynard
 07/27– Bettie Speer



The deadline for the next Parish Visitor is
Thursday, July 19th at 8am.
All articles must be submitted by this date!

THOSE WE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS

Paul Albright
 Alicia/healing
 Jodie Andress
 Bishop and Melissa Beard
 Clark Bennett/health
 Bill Bredden/health
 Joalice Bresson/health
 Renae Brown/mental health
 Alice Cantwell/healing
 Rev. John Crede/health
 Neil David/hospice
 Connie Dellitt/health
 Amanda Donald
 Kathy Downard
 Jim Droste/health
 Brenda Dunn/loss
 Faith/chemo, radiation
 Ruth Ann Farrier
 Amber Fitzsimmons/cancer
 Jayne Fitzsimmons/healing
 Renee Forber/treatment
 Don Franks/cancer
 Marie Fredrickson/InterVarsity
 Family of Lillian Freed
 Ashlie Dellitt Fuller/health
 Gabrielle/FMD
 Tom and Liz Gastil/healing
 Amanda Gaylord/healing
 Luella Giles/injuries
 Family of Bill Glenn
 Scott Guyton/health
 Andrew Hofer/FCA
 Don Harmon/loss
 Vicki Harrison/upcoming surgery
 Linda Hoy
 Stan Hunt/health

Jim Kaufman/health
 Family of Roger Kidoo
 Marcia Kelly/health
 Jeannine Kenney/health
 Family of Marge Lloyd
 Brett McWhorter/health
 Connie & Jessie Midkiff/health
 Family of Kirk Minter
 Linda Morrow/health
 Natalie Nelson/healing
 Paula Nelson/recovery
 Mike Newsom/healing
 Kathy Newswander/cancer treatment
 Noah/recovery
 Family of Dick Norton
 Family of Sara Ott
 Paul & family/addiction
 Bonnie Peterson/health
 Bill Pollock/health
 Janice Pollock/cancer
 Joan Reynolds/health
 Chrissy Riddell/cancer
 Colleen Rillie
 Family of Blake Russell
 Tad Robinson/cancer
 Don Schroeder/health
 Derek Schroeder/health
 Pastor Dave & Candice
 Family of Nathan Seefeld
 Katherine Shondel/health
 Patricia Short/peace
 Family of Gary Smith
 Dianna Spencer/health
 Fern Swanson/broken arm
 Connie Thomas
 Rev. Herb Thompson/health



Jeff Tipton/health
 Dale, Debby, Ashley Thomas
 Family of Cherie Tracy
 Lynn Travis/health
 Nena Visser/health
 Elene Waters/health
 Family of David Weston
 Dick Zimmerman/health
 Liz Zimmerman/health
 Those who are feeling defeated and depressed
 Those in pain and looking for answers
 Respect, Dignity, Equality
 AUMC Family
 Brookstone, nursing home and Vashti residents
 Please pray for our church's committees
 Peace, Love, and Kindness, Kind Words Kind Hearts

Those who are feeling defeated and depressed
 Those in pain and looking for answers
 The United Methodist Church
 Areas affected by tornadoes, Gaza Strip, Haiti, Israel, Maui, Palestine, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan
 Ukraine, World Peace

Mercer County and area Schools
 Administration, Teachers, Students and Staff
 National and Local Governmental Leaders

UMW Fellowship Pork Chops at Mercer Market

Saturday, July 13th, 10:30AM-1PM

Come out and get some delicious pork chop sandwiches for lunch, and support our UMW Christmas gift fund.



CONNECTION COINS FOR JULY

The Connection Coins (the “thinly-veiled Pringles cans”!) are doing great things in the life of the Aledo UMC! On the 2nd Sunday of each month, those cans are set out. You are encouraged to drop your change in- although we WILL accept “folding money”! And that change goes toward helping fund a ministry within the church. This month (July 14th) the Connection Coin offering will go toward an awesome ministry, College Care Packages. Every Fall, the Sunrise Coffee House Adult Sunday School Class puts together Care Packages for young people who are heading to college for the year. These packages include a wide variety of things that are simply designed to brighten their day and remind them that not only does God love them- they have a church full of people praying for them and loving them, too.

The items are donated and lovingly packed. But they have to be mailed. And that postage costs money! And that's where YOU come in! Your coins will help make that happen. So, remember to bring your change on Sunday, July 14th. 100% of the money that is collected in the cans on the 14th of July will be used to help fund this valuable Ministry. What a GREAT way to help connect people to Jesus Christ. So, remember to bring your change on Sunday, July 14th!



CONNECTION COINS PART 2

It is our privilege to support Andrew Hofer who is in his second year as the Area Director for the Three Rivers Fellowship of Christian Athletes. This is a wonderful ecumenical ministry which connects junior high and high school youths to Christ through “huddles” held on school campuses. And students do not have to be athletes in order to participate.

Andrew will be our guest at all three services on Sunday, July 28, and we will have the opportunity of investing in his ministry as we pass around our blue “thinly veiled” Pringle cans. (Yes, we are passing them twice this month!)

Please bring your coins, cash, or checks payable to Aledo UMC. We will give all the proceeds from our Connection Coins to FCA, designated for Andrew. Just a few weeks later, classes will resume in our area schools, so please remember Andrew and our local FCA huddles in your prayers.



Annual conference celebrated *Our Time to Dance*

By Paul Black

PEORIA – The Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference gathered June 6-8 with the theme, *Our Time to Dance*, the final of four expressions focusing on a quadrennial theme of *God Has Made Everything Beautiful in His Time*, based upon Ecclesiastes 3. The theme figured prominently throughout the conference session. Liturgical dancers were a part of both the Laity Session and Service of Ordination. The Retiree Recognition Service included a prelude offered by the nationally-recognized drumline of the Peoria Manual High School band.

During the Conference, two pieces of legislation related to the recently completed General Conference were approved. The Annual Conference, on a 457-144, approved a resolution supporting the creation of several educational opportunities for conference members before the ratification vote at the 2025 Annual Conference.

In a second legislative item, the conference approved a resolution on LGBTQ+ inclusion, 433-177, that authorized the creation of a conference-level LGBTQ+ Ministry Team that will curate, create and share resources for churches that wish to expand its ministry to the LGBTQ+ community.

In anticipation of a special called session of General Conference in 2026, the Conference voted 365-235 to hold new elections in 2025—the first since the current delegation was seated in 2019.

Special offerings during the Annual Conference included: \$4,616.04 for the John Kofi Asmah School in Liberia; \$6,377 for the Tom Brown Scholarship at Wiley College; \$6,721 for the Joyce Helm Francis Endowed Scholarship at Africa University; and \$5,338.74 for the Ordinands' Trip for the classes of 2023 and 2024 to visit the missionary journeys of Paul in spring 2025. In addition, 1,857 pounds of various materials were collected for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center. A Thursday Hands-On Mission Experience resulted in 170 student kits, 170 personal dignity kits and 1,052 rice meal bags. A total of 29 retirees with a combined 752.85 years of service were recognized.

A Memorial Service remembering clergy, clergy spouses and lay members to annual conference that had passed away in the previous year and remembrance of 19 congregations with a combined 2,797 years of ministry that have completed their mission

Conference trustees also announced that a plan for exit for churches seeking to depart as the result of actions taken by the 2024 General Conference is being developed. The plan, which would close the church as a United Methodist congregation would require the payment of two years' worth of apportionments, the church's pro-rata portion of the conference's unfunded pension liability and a 10 percent surcharge for releasing the trust clause, allowing the conveyance of property.

The Annual Conference approved a 2025 budget of \$8,013,000 – a reduction of 7.91 percent over 2024 and nearly 36 percent less over the past five years. With apportionments being relatively flat over the past 10 years, the \$8,013,000 total will be financed by \$6.74 million apportioned to the churches and \$1.273 million from the conference reserve funds. The \$8,013,000 total is the lowest in the history of the 27-year-old conference that merged in 1996. The conference's financial health has remained strong as 2023 ended with a surplus of \$131,404 and an apportionment collection rate of 93.49 percent collection rate.

The 2025 budget and its corresponding apportionment is roughly 11.5 percent of local church operational expenditures and the Conference Council on Finance and Administration is working to bring that total down to 10 percent in order to maintain a collection rate of 90 percent or greater.

A major part of the 2025 budget reduction comes from the reduction of general church apportionments which were approved at the 2024 General Conference. General Church apportionments dropped 24.48 percent for the 2025-28 quadrennium for a reduction of \$583,163 of the \$688,500 in budget reductions.

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Legislatively, the conference approved the health insurance allowance paid to full-time pastors will be \$18,000 for 2025 – the first raise since 2015 when the allowance was set at \$17,500. The conference also approved a 3.3 percent increase to its minimum salaries. In 2025, the salaries will go to \$52,100 for clergy in full connection, associate members and provisional elders; and \$47,809 for full-time local pastors.

Retirees under the pre-1982 pension plan will see a 2 percent increase to \$879 per active service year in 2025, funded by a gift from Preachers' Aid Society and Benefit Fund. The Conference also approved updated eligibility rules for the IGRC Medicare Supplement for retired clergy. Preachers' Aid Society currently provides \$1.25 million annually to finance this benefit.

The Clergy Session approved the election of five elders in full connection. They also approved the recognition of orders of one elder and celebrated with five local pastors on their completion of the Course of Study.

Membership stands at 87,642. Average worship attendance is 26,782 and online worship totals 17,855. Professions of faith were at 278 by confirmation and 495 by other than confirmation. Baptisms totaled 621.

The 2025 Annual Conference will be held June 5-7, 2025, at the Peoria Civic Center in Peoria.

(Paul Black is the Director of Communication Ministries of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Reprinted by permission.)

Understanding action adopted at General Conference

In our April 2024 *Parrish Visitor*, I said to “hold tight” if you don’t like some action taken at General Conference because it takes time for those changes to be disseminated, explained, and understood. That is certainly true regarding action taken by the General Conference to remove the “harmful language” concerning LGBTQ persons from our *Book of Discipline*.

First, a bit of history is in order. Over the years, our *Discipline* has imposed several restrictions on persons seeking to serve in the ministry. At one time, those restrictions were based on skin color. Until 1956, women were restricted from serving in the ministry. At other times, persons who were divorced or who smoked cigarettes were restricted from the ministry. Those restrictions have all been removed from our *Book of Discipline*, and rightly so. As a result of our 2020/2024 General Conference, restrictions prohibiting LGBTQ persons from serving in the ministry have also been removed because that language was found to be harmful.

Our harmful language concerning homosexuality was first passed in the closing hours of the 1972 General Conference, and then it only appeared in our Social Principles, and our Social Principles are not restrictive. Gradually, however, harmful language concerning LGBTQ persons was inserted into the restrictive sections of our *Discipline*.

When General Conference met this spring, there were several resolutions which were much more affirming of LGBTQ persons; however, none of those resolutions were adopted. Instead, as Paul Black, one of our Conference delegates to GC explained at Annual Conference, “We have simply moved back to where we were pre-1972 as it relates to human sexuality.” He added that the goal of General Conference was to take a position of neutrality on the matter and allow for greater autonomy at the local level.

“It was also felt that our harmful language was distracting us from our mission of making disciples,” he explained.

—Pastor Dave

Need a ride to church?

Contact the office at 309-582-2169 or Jon Swanson at 309-371-9501 to make arrangements



Sunday Evening Women's Bible Study

After a successful Advent Bible study and "Bad Girls of the Bible (and What We Can Learn from Them)" study, a new study started on Sunday, June 23rd at 6PM. This study is on the book of Ruth.



Natalie Nelson leads this study which is held at 6 pm most—but not every—Sunday. Interested persons may contact her for details.

Become a "Loominary"

One of the wonderful ministries provided by the Midwest Mission involves weaving plastic sleeping mats which are then shipped overseas to places where refugees and others have been displaced by war or natural disaster. As an added bonus, these mats reuse and repurpose common plastic shopping bags. The mats are woven on looms, and earlier this year our Missions Team purchased a loom.

At 9 am on Tuesday, July 2, Pastor Dave will show us how to utilize our loom and begin weaving a plastic mat. This is a sit-down project and is open to anyone. We will meet in the Fellowship Café where we will take turns weaving our mat. Ideally, eight people will work together on one mat. Coffee will be available. Eventually the loom will be moved to the activity room, and hopefully there will be enough people who learn how to weave plastic mats that anytime anyone wants to engage in this mission, they will be able to do so.

It takes approximately 700 bags to complete one mat. That means that for the foreseeable future, we will be collecting clean plastic retail bags. You may drop them off in the education wing anytime the church is open.

Pastor Dave will lead a second mat weaving session at 9 am Tuesday, July 30.



FINANCIAL MATTERS

(WEEKLY NEED TO HOLD STEADY \$6,018.00)



Date	06/02/2024	06/09/2024	06/16/2024	06/23/2024
Attendance	152	147	151	147
Receipts				
(Toward Budget)	\$8,387.00	\$3,899.00	\$3,693.00	\$3,025.00