



The LUMinary

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Pastoral Letter

Inconvenient Truths of the Bible: On the Role of Women

Last month, our nation celebrated Black History Month while our brothers and sisters across the pond in the United Kingdom celebrated LGBT History Month (I will cover this topic in greater detail in a later edition). This month, our nation prepares to celebrate Women's History Month, which means there is no better time than now to examine just what the Bible has to say about women.

To do this, one ought to start at the beginning and that is just what we will do. "In the beginning... God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:1a, 27, CEB) This is the testimony of origins of humanity in the first creation account, but many of us will likely recall more readily the details of humanity's creation from the second creation account, found in Genesis 2:21-23. It is this second account—the one where Eve is created second, after God takes a rib from Adam's side to create a worthy companion for him—that has been used throughout the centuries to subjugate women within the institution of marriage and relegate them to a lesser tier of society.

Then there are the later passages, especially from the Apostle Paul, that tell us that women should not speak (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), teach (1 Timothy 2:12), or have any leadership roles in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34), and that they should cover their heads and dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

These patterns and beliefs did not only affect the lives of women within the church, but they also impacted the lives of women in the world beyond the church. Let's take our nation for one. Our nation was founded under the pretense that all "men" were created equal while denying women and African Americans the right to vote. It is also well documented that there is a strong history of pay inequity between men and women in our nation, and that there has been a historic practice of women being passed up for promotion in male dominated fields.

While the United Methodist Church acknowledges in their most current Social Principles that "we affirm with Scripture the common humanity of male and female, both having equal worth in the eyes of God," even our denominations track record with the equal and just treatment of women within the church is not ideal. There was no official provision for the ordination of women within the Wesleyan tradition until the founding of the United Methodist Church in 1968. Prior to this, there was a historical practice of barring women from the pulpit.

Despite the prior practices of our institution, our denomination did finally come around to the full blessing and scope of God's creation of humanity—well almost, but we'll cover the issue of gender in more detail in a later newsletter. The UMC was eventually able to examine the question of women's roles in the life of the church and the world in light of the full scope of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and finally came to a new conclusion.

After all, tradition and history tell us that John Wesley himself—the founder of the movement from which our denomination came—licensed women to preach as early as 1761. Then Scripture tells us the stories of numerous women and pivotal roles they played in the foundation of our faith: In the Hebrew Bible, we find the stories of Ruth and Esther, as well as Jael the foreigner who decided the outcome of a war with a glass of milk and a tent stake (Judges 4:17-21). In the New Testament, there was the prophetess Anna who proclaimed Jesus’ divinity in the Temple (Luke 2:36) and Priscilla who was a prominent leader in the church—even to the point of being listed before her husband (Acts 18). In all four accounts of the resurrection, women were not only the first witnesses, but also the first people that Jesus sent out to proclaim the resurrection (Mark 16:9-10, Mathew 28:2-10, Luke 24:9-10, and John 20:17-18). And that is simply to name a few.

These compelling stories and the historical traditions of our movement, taken alongside our experiences of all the good that women have done and can do in the world if just given the chance, were what it took for our denomination and our society to embrace the full potential of women more fully. There is still work to be done, but we can take a moment to pause and celebrate just how far we have come during Women’s History Month.

May God bless you all,

Pastor Tiffany

Pastor Tiffany is still visiting folks upon request. If you would like a visit, please call the church office or parsonage and she would be delighted to make arrangements to visit you at your home or at the church, whatever is most comfortable for you!

Coming to God in WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP:

As we enter into the season of Lent and begin to prepare for the launch of Messy Church, we plan to introduce you to Messy Church one small step at a time. So if you are interested in learning more about what Messy Church is or are interested in experiencing it one small piece at a time, then come to worship during Lent! Below you will find a list of dates, sermon titles, and scripture lessons, and the rotation of fellowship hour hosts for the weeks ahead. AND a brief hint at what our glimpse into Messy Church might look like each week.

March 6	An Opportune Time A Glimpse into Messy Church	Luke 4:1-13 Hospitality
March 13	Under the Wings A Glimpse into Messy Church	Luke 13:31-35 Praying Together
March 20	If it Bears Fruit A Glimpse into Messy Church	Luke 13:1-9 All-Age Activity
March 27	Lost & Found A Glimpse into Messy Church	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 Activity
April 3	Filled with the Fragrance A Glimpse into Messy Church	John 12:1-8 Celebrating and Eating Together

Coffee Hour Hosts:

March 6:	Ed & Diana Carpenter
March 13:	John & Joan Peck
March 20:	Matt & Lori Wagner
March 27:	Tom & Sandy Turek

Special Music:

March 6:	Faith Ringers Handbells
March 13:	Chapelaire Choir
March 20:	Joyful Noise Bells
March 27:	Chapelaire Choir



COMING TO LAINGSBURG UMC beginning in April 2022!

Messy Church is church, but not church as you know it! It is a way of being church for all-ages to join in experiencing fun and faith formative activities. Found throughout the globe. Based on the values of all-ages together, celebration, creativity, hospitality, and centering ourselves in Christ.

WHAT IS MESSY CHURCH?

Messy Church is...

◆ Christ-centered

Messy Church is a church, not a craft club that helps people to encounter and enter into a transforming relationship with Jesus. Messy Church believes with the historic churches, in one God who is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

◆ All Age

Messy Church is for adults and children to enjoy together. Every element should be relevant and accessible to all ages.

◆ Creativity

Messy Church uses hands-on activities to explore Bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and to give people a chance to play together.

◆ Celebration

Messy Church reflects a God of joy who wants all of God's people to have life in all its fullness.

◆ Hospitality

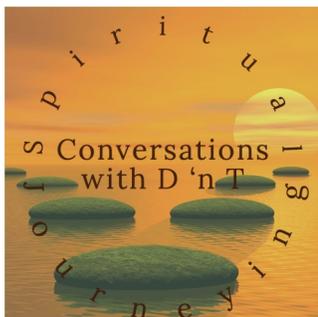
Messy Church reflects a God of unconditional love and is a church for people outside of a traditional church, providing an oasis of welcome and a safe place in which to thrive. Messy Church is about hospitality, expressed most evidently by eating together-whether it's a plate of sandwiches to share, a full course meal or pizza.

Are you interested in learning more about Messy Church and what Messy Church might look like here at our church? You are in luck! There are several ways that you can learn more:

1. Check out this video about Messy Church: <https://youtu.be/ipsmG7BTGgo>
2. Check out the family ministries page of our website OR the Messy Church website itself. Link to: <http://www.laingsburgumc.org/discovery/familyministries.html> and <https://messychurchusa.org/>
3. Check out one of the video blogs we will be posting on facebook and the family ministries page of our website in the months ahead.
4. Attend worship through the month of March when we will be highlighting different aspects of a Messy Church Worship Service during our weekly Sunday Morning Worship Services.
5. Or talk to Pastor Tiffany, Diana Carpenter, or Jessie Sebenick for more information.

DISCOVERING More about God and Grow in Faith:

Our latest Bible Study on the United Methodist Social Principles has begun! You can join us any time. We meet on Thursdays at 10 am. Our social principles include highly thought-out theological statements on controversial subjects from our responsibility to care for the environment to our life together to our engagement in the political sphere and everything in between.



Diana Carpenter and Pastor Tiffany have launched a new podcast series entitled "Conversations with D'n T: Spiritual Journeying" in which we will strive to enhance people's understanding of God and church, as we walk our spiritual journeys. Through this series we hope to ask and answer some of the tough questions about God, faith, church, and so much more, so that we can all become more comfortable asking these questions and enhance our spiritual journeys in the process. You can find these podcasts on our Facebook page, website, iTunes and YouTube or by clicking on the link provided.

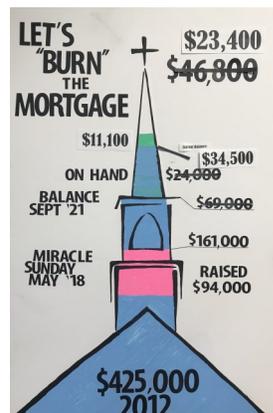
<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1785279>

Update on "Burn the Mortgage"

Mortgage balance as of 2/28/22: \$34,500

Money on hand as of 2/24/22: \$11,100

Money needed to "Burn the Mortgage": \$23,400



SERVICE and Mission Opportunities:

Looking Glass Service Opportunities:

Want to be a Volunteer Taxi Driver?



Community Garden will be starting up soon—want to rent a plot?



For more information, please contact Jan Holyfield or Dave Draggoo.



The Laingsburg Area Food Bank continues to operate out of the building and continues to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. If you know someone in our community who is in need, please refer them to the Food Bank. It is open Mondays 1:00-3:00 pm and Thursdays 6:00-8:00 pm.

Would you like to volunteer? Contact the Church Office and we will get you in touch with the volunteer coordinator.



The Service Ministry Focus Team met in February to establish of Service goals for the coming year. The primary purpose of this meeting was to establish which of the various EngageMI projects we plan to engage with in the coming year. There are three focus areas for the EngageMI program: Learn, Give, and Act. And there will be lots of opportunities for us to Learn, Give, Act, and grow in our understanding of God and the world throughout the year ahead! For now, though, we are pleased to announce the list of programs and organizations we plan to support through the various steps of EngageMI’s “Give” focus area. Be on the look out for more information to come! In addition to our usual EngageMI Learn, Give, and Act goals, our Core Youth Group is planning a Mission Trip to the United Methodist Committee on Relief’s Mid-West Distribution Center from June 15-17—you can find more information about that further along in your newsletter.

STEP 1: Michigan Conference Ministry Shares
<p>We managed pay our 2021 Conference Ministry Shares in full, and even had enough left over to pay our 2022 District Ministry Shares in full as well! We thank you all for your dedication to this vital work. Our goal is to do just that again in 2022. Our church has been asked to raise \$14,460 this year, and we are confident we can do that.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Funds raised to date: \$350.00</p>
STEP 2: Michigan Projects
<p>Mission Intern Program—A ministry of the Michigan Annual Conference, encourages young adults to explore servant ministry for a summer. Interns work to provide summer programming for children and youth in rural and urban areas at locations across our state including West Branch UMC, Motown Mission, and Cass Community Services. https://www.facebook.com/MIMissionIntern</p>
<p>Looking Glass Community Outreach—A community based, non-profit agency located in the southwest corner of Shiawassee County. LGCO collaborates with individuals & families, groups, local churches (like LUMC) and other agencies to enable & empower those in need to tear down any barriers that may cause them to feel alone and isolated from the community as a whole. Some programs they provide are emergency assistance, volunteer taxi, community garden, and reading assistance. For ways to support this ministry beyond your financial giving, please look for regular updates in our newsletter and other announcements. http://lookingglassoutreach.org/</p>
STEP 3: National Projects
<p>National Justice for Our Neighbors (NJFON)—supports and empowers a coalition of 20 JFON sites around the country that work to welcome immigrants and refugees by providing legal assistance that aspiring residents need but cannot afford or access. Through JFON’s attorneys, they help immigrants understand their choices and navigate the complexities of the legal system. Through their extensive volunteer corps, they are able to create a welcoming community that honors immigrants as fellow human beings. https://nifon.org/about-us/</p>
STEP 4: International Projects
<p>Heifer International Living Gifts—This is a project we have supported before and look forward to supporting again! Heifer International works with communities to end hunger and poverty by promoting sustainable farming practices. https://www.heifer.org/our-work/index.html</p>
<p>Haitian Assets for Peace International—a grassroots organization in the community of Mizak, Haiti that empowers people, promotes health and wellness, delivers skilled training, brings technology and creates economic opportunities to grow personal and community assets for families to thrive not only survive. Their integrated approach harnesses the natural synergy between health, education, and economic development to create momentum for change. https://www.haitianassets.org/</p>
<p>Ganta United Methodist Hospital—Provides quality and affordable healthcare in the rural north of Liberia. https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/ganta-united-methodist-hospital/</p>
STEP 5: Methodist Mission Personnel
<p>Chin H. Cho— A missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries serving as the coordinator of the United Methodist Mission in Mongolia, based in Ulaanbaatar. He was commissioned in June 2015. As the country coordinator, Chin oversees the several aspects of ministry, working with local Mongolian United Methodist leaders and other missionaries. He engages in the training of indigenous clergy, who study at the Mongolia Trinity Bible College, where he teaches Wesleyan studies. https://umcmmission.org/missionary-bio/3022047/</p>
STEP 6: United Methodist Committee on Relief Special Project
<p>Finally, the EngageMI program encourages us to go above and beyond our regular UMCOR Sunday Special Offering to extend continued support to the United Methodist Committee on Relief’s work around the world. This year, we have committed to sending all funds designated for UMCOR that you do not allocate for a specific project or disaster response to Where most needed.</p>

Core Youth Group mission trip update:

In June, the Core Youth Group and a few supporters will travel to Pawnee, Ill. to work in the UMCOR Midwest Mission Distribution Center. They'll spend two days helping sort, carry and pack personal hygiene and cleaning kits. They may also learn to sew, work with an electrician or build a desk.

The group from LUMC will be helping fulfill UMCOR's mission of bringing the hearts and hands of God's people together to transform resources into humanitarian relief. Midwest Mission specializes in education, health, disaster relief and micro-business supplies. It distributes its kits, resources and supplies locally, nationally and internationally to those in need during times of crisis. All supplies are given free of charge regardless of gender, race or religion.

There are 10 cooperating "depots" in the UMCOR supply network. For its volunteers, Midwest Mission specifically strives to accommodate a wide variety of ability levels, from sit-down work to manual labor. While in Pawnee, the group will:

- Pack hygiene and cleaning kits
- Sort donated items
- Sew
- Help with mailings
- Build desks
- Repair bicycles & sewing machines
- Help load/unload supplies



Or do whatever the requested needs are at the time.

The group has wanted to do a significant, hands-on mission project for awhile. We feel especially excited about helping at an UMCOR facility because the volunteer spots go fast! The Midwest Mission Distribution Center only allows 26 volunteers per day across two shifts. Finding dates with shifts that had enough spots open to accommodate our group was not easy. Currently, we have five youth, two parents, Pastor Tiffany, John Peck—Service Missional Focus Team Chairperson, and Carrie Rathbun Hawks—Core Coordinator—making the trek. **That leaves 2 spots open for adult members of our congregation. If you are interested in joining the team please speak to Carrie Rathbun Hawks or Pastor Tiffany.**

Core members and those joining them will need to pay for lodging, food, gas, and the materials costs required by Midwest Mission. A budget is in the works. Thanks to the support of our congregation and community, we had a great start to our fundraising effort with the Classical Bells concert in December. We also received a \$430 grant from our blood drives this summer and fall. So far, the youth have roughly \$1,000 toward its trip. Praise the Lord!

We have a few fundraising opportunities coming up!

Tuesday, March 1: All-you-can-eat Pancake Supper from 5:00-7:30 pm.
Take-outs are available. Cost is by donation .



Cans & Bottles: We continue to collect returnable cans & bottles. They can be brought to the church anytime during office hours or on Sunday.



WIN – WIN – WIN!
DONATE TOWARD A MEAL
for a
FOOD-INSECURE PERSON OR FAMI-
LY
and
SUPPORT A LOCAL BUSINESS

Everyone likes to eat out once in awhile but not everyone can afford it. Our restaurants are coming back from the pandemic. Money for Meals puts people in need at their tables and money in their registers.

You feel the joy of passing kindness forward!

Participating Businesses:



In **2021**, our community raised **\$1,731** in addition to the \$1,500 grant that was received from the Michigan Conference UMC Board of Justice and our local businesses **served 63 meals to patrons**. In the month of **January 2022** alone, our participating businesses have served an additional **120 people**. This is exciting news! It means the people in our community who need it are using the program, but it also means we are need of more funds to keep the program running.

Please consider supporting this worthwhile program and the people of our community by donating. You can donate at any one of our participating businesses, online through our online giving platform, or by mailing or dropping funds off at the church office.