

THE MESSENGER

The United Methodist Church in Stow



January 2025

"A box of chocolates"

A couple of months ago I saw a guy wearing a tee-shirt. As most tee-shirts, it had writing on it. This one had the words, "How did you like 2020?" followed by a line of check boxes down the shirt. The first read "great," the second "good," then "fair," with the final one, "poor." It was the last one that had the "X" in the check box. What a surprise.



I am sure that most of us would agree. But I also think that most of us would say that we never expected it to be what it was. As I think back about it, I can't think of much that happened that year, let alone something memorable (except being on a cruise that got canceled half way thru).

As the year started, it seemed normal. But "life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you will get." As this year starts, it also seems normal, whatever normal is for you. But we need to remember that "life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you will get." This is true for this year also.

When you reach into the box and take a piece, what will you get? The kind you like or one you need to eat because you already touched it. The answer to this problem is to make sure you have the right box to choose from. In my case it would need to be white chocolate only.

If you have the box with the kind you like you will have high expectations when choosing a piece of candy. If you have high expectations for the coming year, it is far more likely you will have them met. But be sure you have the right box to choose from. The right box is being surrounded by the people you like.

Upcoming Events

Un-Hanging of the Greens

We will be un-decorating the sanctuary and narthex for the Christmas season on Sunday, **Jan 5** following the worship Service. Please consider staying for a short time to help with this event.



Worship Planning Meeting

All are invited to attend a worship planning meeting on Sunday, **Jan. 12th** following the service. This will be an opportunity to weigh-in on scripture lessons, themes, and music for the upcoming worship services. We will continue to meet monthly on the second Sunday of the month going forward. The meetings should last no more than one hour. Please plan to attend.



Book Club will be meeting on Monday, Feb 24th at 3 pm in the church parlor to discuss The Memory Police by Yoko Ogawa. Everyone is welcome to join the discussion!





From the Stow UMC Preschool.....

The Stow UMC Preschool had such a great month of December! The themes focused on winter, hibernation and of course, Christmas! Our Pre-K classes learned all about animals that hibernate, migrate, and adapt in the winter, with stories and hands-on fun. One of our Christmas units was on gingerbread, and one of our Pre-K classes even had a gingerbread hunt around the church! We ended our Christmas fun with parties in the classroom and decorating Christmas cookies. The children sang a few songs for their parents in the sanctuary at the end of the day and then headed to the classrooms for hot cocoa and gingerbread cookies for all. Santa even came for a short visit with the children and their families! The Preschool children and teachers are now enjoying Winter Break with their families, and will return to school on January 6th.



Noisy Offering



We collected \$130.00 on Dec 22nd for our Noisy Offering. Thank you! That was our highest collection in 2024! This offering is collected on the 4th Sunday of each month. Any loose change or other money collected goes to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for their missions. Please save your change for our next collection on January 26th. Thank you!

Praise

*Praise the Lord! Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!
Praise God from the earth, you sea monsters and creatures of the depths, you
fire and hail, snow and frost!* - Psalm 148:1-2, 7-8 (NRSV adapted)

What makes the T-Rex dinosaur a scientific fact and the Loch Ness monster an ancient myth?

It's a rhetorical question, mainly. To a large extent, I believe the distinction doesn't matter. It's certainly not worth fighting over. It doesn't make much difference in the daily lives of millions of people.

But the question of science vs. myth points my spirit toward something important: faith needs fiction, perhaps far more than it needs facts.

By which I mean: faith needs imagination. Wild and wondering and expansive imagination. Faith needs the unimaginable and the improbable. Faith needs awe. It needs questions that cannot be answered; it needs stories that reach beyond the limits of knowledge.

While faith might long to claim certainty, it does its best work when it claims surrender. When it gives in to hope. When it opts for unearned trust. When it lives in dreams and aspirations beyond what can be proven. When it tells stories.

Madeleine L'Engle wrote in *Glimpses of Grace*: "Myth is the closest approximation to truth available to the finite human being."

Somewhere in the chasms of the oceans, there are sea monsters praising God. The Bible tells us so, although we may never know whether the psalmist was writing about a cousin of Loch Ness, a descendent of T-Rex, or a creature of the psalmist's own imagination. The provability of the monster isn't the point.

The point is creation's praise for God, which is beyond imagining. In fact, creation's praise of God is so vast and wild that it can only be told in fiction.

Prayer

Praise God for the praises too mystical and magical for me to perceive!



We are collecting toothbrushes and toothpaste (not travel size) through the end of the year for Bulldog Bags. Look for the container in the narthex.

Here are the YouTube links for the January worship services.

Jan 5 - <https://youtube.com/live/ycfGvEag3Wk?feature=share>

Jan 12 - <https://youtube.com/live/DJ7Z9NLfSO0?feature=share>

Jan 19 - <https://youtube.com/live/GBSgIXqst4c?feature=share>

Jan 26 - <https://youtube.com/live/Nsi0DjpnBWM?feature=share>

New Year's Prayer

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you." God said to him, "Because you have asked for this, I will now do just what you said. There has been no one like you before now, nor will there be anyone like you afterward." – 1 Kings 3:5–12 (CEB, adapted)

As a rule, I discourage theologies that reduce God to a divine Santa Claus and treat prayer as a personal wish list. But on this day when many of us feel pressured to make resolutions toward self-improvement, perhaps we could instead turn to prayer and ask God for what we and the world really need.

We could consider who Love calls us to be, and the ways in which we will need to change and grow to allow Love to more fully live in and through us. We could admit that we'll need help with that—and ask for it.

The brand-new King Solomon asked God not for power or wealth but for the discernment he would need to be a wise and just ruler.


Perhaps we could ask God to give us the faith to follow Jesus into a brand-new year.

We could ask for a double portion of love for all God's children. We could pray that our hearts be so filled with love that there would be no room left for fear.

After all, there has been no one like us before, nor will there be anyone like us after this. This time—this new year—requires transformed and loving people, and God both calls and equips us to do the work.

Prayer

Hear our prayers, and give us the boldness to ask for what your people need.

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
9am Sunday School 10am Worship Service						
			1 Church closed	2 5:30pm Jazzercise 6-8pm Food Pantry 6pm Chancel Choir	3 9am Jazzercise Office closed	4
5 Un-Hanging of the Greens following Worship	6 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Scout Troop 270/FH	7 5:30pm Jazzercise	8 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry	9 5:30pm Jazzercise 6-8pm Food Pantry 6pm Chancel Choir 7pm Brees Bells	10 9am Jazzercise Scout Winter Lock In 5pm → 10am Office closed	11
12 Worship Planning Meeting following the service	13 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Scout Troop 270/FH	14 5:30pm Jazzercise 7pm Committee Night	15 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry	16 5:30pm Jazzercise 6-8pm Food Pantry 6pm Chancel Choir 7pm Brees Bells	17 9am Jazzercise Office closed	18
19	20 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Scout Troop 270/FH	21 9am Helping Hands 5:30pm Jazzercise	22 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry	23 5:30pm Jazzercise 6-8pm Food Pantry 6pm Chancel Choir 7pm Brees Bells	24 9am Jazzercise Office closed	25
26 Noisy Offering	27 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Scout Troop 270/FH	28 5:30pm Jazzercise Ad Board 7pm	29 9am Jazzercise 9am-12pm Food Pantry	30 5:30pm Jazzercise 6-8pm Food Pantry 6pm Chancel Choir 7pm Brees Bells	31 9am Jazzercise Office closed	



United Methodist Church
In Stow
4880 Fishcreek Rd.
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GROW-GATHER-GO

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**

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Our Mission: Grow in Faith in Christ~ Reach Out in God's Love

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Church Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:00 am– 3:00 pm

Deadline for the Sunday Worship bulletin: Wednesdays at noon

Deadline for the newsletter, *The Messenger*: 24th of each month

Don't forget our Permanent Endowment Fund in your will. Make The United Methodist Church in Stow a part of your financial planning.