Rejoice in hope, 
be patient in suffering, 
persevere in prayer.

Romans 12:12, NRSV
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are in the time of Lent, which means that we recently recorded the Ash Wednesday service. It was different, in that I was unable to do the usual imposition of ashes due to where we are with the pandemic. What was not different is that in the ashes we are reminded of the need for redemption and reconciliation with God though the sacrifice of Jesus. This message was a part of the first Ash Wednesday and will always be until Jesus returns. This simple message is so important all the time, but is especially poignant this time of year, as we are called to make ourselves ready to stand before the cross so that we can go to the empty tomb.

A book I have has a chapter about the season with the heading “From Ashes to Fire.” It is talking about Ash Wednesday to Pentecost. This illustrates the movement from the ash and the image of our own mortality to the fire, and also fulfillment of God’s promises in the acts of Jesus and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. During the Ash Wednesday service, I pointed out that the Hebrew word for evil and disaster is very similar and can even be used interchangeably. God calls us from evil or disaster to redemption. In this we see the actions of Jesus are responsible for our redemption, which is the catalyst for reconciliation with God. This should be nothing new for you all, but instead a reminder of what should be on our minds as we go thought these forty days of Lent. It should be ever present as we journey with Jesus on the road that will eventually lead to Jerusalem and the cross, and all the joy that will come from that dark day as God brings life from death and turns our mourning into dancing on Easter morning.

So as we go down this journey, let’s think about who Jesus is. We will be going though the “I Am” statements of Jesus during Lent to look at how Jesus describes himself and his mission. We are doing this in my Sunday messages and also in the study. This is important, because all of the events of Lent and Easter and beyond hang on the truth that Jesus is who he says he is.

So in this time, I challenge you to think seriously on what we will hear and who Jesus says he is, so that when you go before the cross on Good Friday, you will understand who it is that gets nailed to the tree and why, despite the horrible nature of what happened, it is indeed a Good Friday.

~ Pastor

Psalm 30 (NRSV)

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

(Continued on next page.)
Psalm 30 (Continued)

For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”
By your favor, O LORD,
you had established me as a strong mountain;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.
To you, O LORD, I cried,
and to the LORD I made supplication:

“What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”
You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

March 14 is UMCOR Sunday

UMCOR Sunday is March 14, 2021. This offering is collected on the fourth Sunday in Lent and provides major support for immediate assistance in the wake of natural and human-caused disasters. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to respond with extravagant grace. Through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), we are able to make a difference in the lives of communities and individuals whose lives have been upset by storms, wars, fires, displacement and climate change. This offering underwrites UMCOR’s “costs of doing business,” allowing 100% of any gift to a specific UMCOR project to go to that project, not administrative costs.

You can now give to UMCOR Sunday online at opendoorumc.org or on the GivePlus mobile app.

UMCOR Sunday offering envelopes will be available to pick up at church and mailed out with the next Update mailing.

40 Days of Giving

Shop with your family for items to donate to the local Food Shelf. Lent is 40 Days (not counting Sundays). On Easter you’ll have a box of 40 items to donate. Below, are a few ideas.

- Pop-tops, soups, & pastas
- Crackers (single serve packs)
- Peanut butter & Jelly
- Canned tuna & chicken
- Bottled water
- Juice boxes
- Granola bars / healthy snacks
- Cereal
- Canned fruits & vegetables
- Spaghetti & sauce
- Snack-sized nuts
- Heat & eat canned meals
March Mission: The Graners

Our Lenten offering is all going to mission—supporting our missionaries Ardell & Gordon Graner and the work they are doing in Dominican Republic.

Gordy & Ardell have been suffering along with the Dominican people, especially their co-workers. The Dominicans have been affected physically, economically, and especially psychologically and Graner’s hearts ache for them. Domestic violence is rising in the country due to stay at home orders and the severe economic impact of the pandemic. The Graners are working with the church there to take a stand against domestic violence. They’ve also been assisting with distributing food to the neediest of families in the DR. You may recall that the Graners are also involved with the distribution of solar ovens to needy families. They use a fuel source that they have a lot of in the DR—sun. Besides being much cheaper to use, cooking with solar ovens is much healthier than the coal or wood-fire fuel that they use otherwise. Solar ovens have improved living for many and they want to expand the usage to more people once it’s safer to travel around.

Please give generously in support of the Graners and their work! We have a Covenant Relationship with them to support them with prayers and finances. The financial part this year is $1,250. It is figured into our budget and is based on membership.

If you give online, Lenten Offering is one of the fund options you can choose from. Or use your special Lenten envelope, or mark clearly on your check or envelope.

Gordon & Ardell Graner, UMC missionaries

Delivering bags of rice, beans, pigeon peas, spaghetti noodles, sardines and salami to a church in a rural community of Dominican Republic
Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars® by March 31

Eligible Thrivent Financial members who have been designated Choice Dollars have until March 31, 2021, to direct them. Don’t miss this opportunity to recommend that Thrivent Financial provide grant funding to Open Doors UMC. In 2020, Open Doors was granted $208 from Thrivent members directing their Choice Dollars to the church. Go to Thrivent.com/thriventchoice to learn more. Or call 800-847-4836 and after the prompt say “Thrivent Choice.” Thank You!

“Seek a relationship when you pray, not answers. You won’t always find answers, but you will always find Jesus.”

—Father Mike Schmitz

Harley (96) and Irene (96) Miller

Word has been received that Harley & Irene Miller both passed away about a month from each other. Harley died December 20, 2020, and Irene died January 24, 2021, both as a result of Covid-19 and complications from it. Harley & Irene farmed the Miller home farm north of Wells and were active members of Wells UMC before moving to Albert Lea. In their later years, they lived in St. Paul. They will be buried in Dunbar Memorial Cemetery at a later date.

Lucas Harvey Mortenson
Born January 28, 2021
9 lb. 3 oz., 22” long
Lucas is the son of Wes & Jess Mortenson, little brother of Henry (3), and grandson of Jim Bathke and the late Pat Bathke.

Evelyn Ann Ramsley
Born February 24, 2021
8 lbs., 20¼” long
Evelyn is the daughter of Cole & Sarah Ramsley of Fairfax, little sister of Maya (4½), and granddaughter of Karen & Don Stenzel and Jeff & Deb Ramsley.

Easter Flowers

Easter will be here before you know it, and Covid willing, we will be rejoicing in-person this year. We would love a sanctuary full of fragrant lilies and other spring flowers. If you would like to supply a plant, please feel free to purchase and bring it to the church or have it delivered by Friday, April 2. Let Sarah know what to expect by calling or emailing the church office.
Lenten Studies

*The God We Can Know: Exploring the “I Am” Sayings of Jesus* is the Lenten study this year. It is on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 on Zoom. It began February 24, but it’s not too late to join. Pastor Chris, along with his father, Pastor David Leistra, are leading this 6-week study. Sunday sermons will coordinate with the book. What is discussed on Wednesday would have been introduced in the sermon the previous Sunday. If you’d like to participate in the study, contact Pastor Chris at pastorumc@bevcomm.net or 920-765-3665, and he’ll see that you get a link to the Zoom meeting. If you would like a book, either for the study, or just to follow along with the sermons, they are $8.00 and you can get from Sarah at church or order on your own.

Gain a deeper understanding of the “I am” sayings of Jesus. The more we know who God is the more we know who we are. The Gospel of John records several declarations of Jesus known as the “I Am” sayings. Explore each of those sayings to help you find and form an answer to the most essential question in the Christian faith, “Who do you say I am?” The DVD, filmed on location in the Holy Land, allows you to travel with Rob Fuquay and actually see the places where Jesus stood while disclosing his true identity, and in what context he spoke each “I Am.”

Or, you might be interested in this study:

*Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times, by Bishop Michael Curry*

This is the Conference-wide Lenten study and can be started anytime you like. Explore questions about love such as: How do I find God’s love? Do I have to love my enemy? Can love really change the world? The Conference Appointive Cabinet has recorded commentary videos for each week. The video links and discussion guides are at [www.minnesotumc.org/2021-lenten-study](http://www.minnesotumc.org/2021-lenten-study), as well as .

Have you looked through the Lenten materials in the Drive-Thru gift bag? If you didn’t go through the drive-thru on Feb. 7, we have extras at church. “Come to the Light” invites and encourages readers to spend time reflecting with God’s Word day by day. In just minutes a day, this booklet provides both Scripture and a daily prayer, calling believers to abandon sin and “Come to the Light.” This pocket-sized booklet will help you prepare for the joy of Easter.

*For families,* the Drive-Thru bags have been individualized to include family and teen Lenten devotions and activity pages. This is a nice gift for your family to learn about Lent together and get ready for Easter! You can pick it up at church.
Worship Calendar & Schedule

In-person worship with services at
9:00 a.m. in Wells and 10:30 a.m. in Kiester

Masks must be worn and 6-ft distancing must be followed.
We still recommend caution, and for those in risk groups to worship from
home. If at any time you are not feeling well, please stay home.

Please note the earlier time for the live stream.

9:00 am Live Streaming on YouTube & Facebook

March 7............Scriptures: Exodus 14:19-25; John 10:1-10
     Sermon Series: “I Am” statements of Jesus, week 3.
     Title: “I Am the Good Shepherd”

March 14...........Scriptures: Ezekiel 17:22-24; John 15:1-8
     Title: “I Am the True Vine”

March 21.........Scriptures: Numbers 21:1-9; John 14:1-7
     Sermon Series: “I Am” statements of Jesus, week 5.
     Title: “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

March 28.........Revelation 21:1-7; romans 8:9-11; John 11:17-26
     Title: “I Am the Resurrection and the Life”

ONLINE: Live at 9:00 am on Facebook and You Tube.
Go to www.opendoorsumc.org and click on the small Facebook or You Tube logos in the red menu bar. In YouTube, click on the red subscribe button and then the “bell” to be alerted every time we go live. The live video will be saved on both Facebook and YouTube for viewing later if you miss the live version.

www.opendoorsumc.org – a recording will be posted on our website usually by Sunday noon or Monday at the latest.

Bevcomm Cable TV, Ch. 990:  Tuesdays at 11:00 am and 8:00 pm
                        Fridays at 6:00 pm

Note: If anyone without computer or cable service would like a DVD recording, they are available from the Wells church library. Contact the church office.
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<td>2 Peter 3:18</td>
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<td>God, during this season of Lent, help us to experience your love and growing our relationship with you.</td>
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<td>8 Brad Kaiser</td>
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<td>15 Kara Christianson</td>
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<td>Hayden Chandler</td>
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Prayers for Lent

God, during this season of Lent, help us to experience your love and growing our relationship with you. 2 Peter 3:18

God, provide us with opportunity to reflect on our commitment to you. Psalm 150:3-4

God, lead us to pray for our enemies and to forgive them. Luke 3:17

God, have mercy on us and turn us toward your grace. Philippians 4:13

Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 10:12
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Youth Day Retreat – March 13
Saturday, March 13 will be a Youth Day Retreat at Prairie River Camp. Youth in grades 7-12 are welcome to attend. The details are in the works, but it will start in the morning, maybe 9 a.m. until late afternoon or evening. When all the details are together I will send you the schedule. Parents will need to get your kids to Prairie River and pick them up. It will be amazing that we are able to spend time together in worship, learning, playing, eating and just hanging out! If you have not signed up yet, but want to come, please let me know. Sandy. 

50’s Malt Shoppe
I am not sure we will be able to have the Malt Shoppe like normal this year. But I am looking for suggestions of how we could do it. Outside? I am open for your creative ideas!!

Youth Group
We are going to try meeting in person now. If you are sick at all, or if someone in your house is sick with Covid, please stay home. Just follow the school rules. We will be masking and distancing. We will start at 6:30 at church. See you there!!! On Ash Wednesday we learned more about Lent, and why people give up things. And we also learned about taking up things. We can take up: reading the Bible, prayer, daily devotions, listening to Christian music, any way to get closer to God. Learn about the enormous LOVE Jesus has for us!

Pick which one you want to dive into and have fun learning and growing in Christ!

You’ve Been Egged!
The Youth Group and I will be putting together Easter eggs for the You’ve Been Egged event. Every house we go to will get 12 Easter eggs, with 11 of them filled with candy. One of them will be empty representing that Jesus has risen! We will come and put eggs in your yard (unless it is too muddy, then we will put the bag of eggs on your doorstep), we will ring the doorbell and run. Have fun finding your eggs and remembering what Jesus has done for you and how much he loves you! We will be distributing the eggs sometime the week of March 29. If anyone would like to donate mini Easter candy bars you can bring them to church by March 24. We hope to fill the eggs at Youth Group on March 24.

40 Days of Giving
Our church is suggesting you do a “40 Days of Giving” during Lent (see page 3). Every-day during Lent, which started on Feb. 17, put one food item in a box. By the end of Lent you should have 40 items to donate to the food shelf. Hope it can be a fun family mission project for you all!
Snowmen for Parkview

On February 23, kids of all ages built snowmen for the residents at Parkview Care Center to enjoy. The weather was warm and snow was just perfect. Residents got to watch through the windows. Betty Olson said that all those who came to watch the kids were so glad to see them. Residents were lined up all across the room! Everyone really enjoyed it! LaVon Wegner was there watching and hopes the snowmen will hang around for a long time before they melt. Pam Warmka, a nurse at Parkview, wrote this: “Thank you to all of you that brought such happiness and joy to our residents!! The next day they were picking out fun things on each them. Even telling other residents that one looks like you!! Thank you for sharing your time with us!!!”
We are very excited to welcome campers to Camp Minnesota locations in Summer 2021! “Summer is better with camp,” says Keith Shew, the director for Dakotas-Minnesota Camp and Retreat Ministries.

Go to www.campminnesota.org to view their digital catalog and check out all the happenings including information on:

- Available camps and events
- How to register for camp
- COVID-19 safety at camp
- Campership information and application
- Staff and volunteer opportunities
- Ways you can support your camps.

Camp sessions are filling up or quickly reaching capacity limits. Don’t delay! Register today! Register by April 30 to receive $25 camp store credit. Wells UMW unit offers camperships of up to $75. Contact Ruth Roesler: 553-3709.

Camp Minnesota is actively seeking summer staff at all camp locations. Visit www.campminnesota.org to apply.

Are you missing the chance to make music with others in this time of separation? We can do bells/chimes fairly safe. Six ringers, wearing masks and standing six feet apart, can make music together. Anyone, from Open Doors UMC or not, is welcome to come try this out. There is note reading and rhythm reading involved, so if this would be a new experience for you, having learned to play an instrument would make it a bit easier. The day and time will be determined by the group, starting in March.

Anyone who would like to give this a try, please let Jan know by email--wellsumcmusic@gmail.com, or call 553-5077. We will need six people complete a choir.

Make Easter offerings online during the Easter season! It is encouraging to see both new and familiar faces at our worship services. Throughout the year, many of you already support the congregation with your time, talent and financial contributions and we are very grateful for your faithful giving. But greater seasonal participation is always welcome. We encourage you to consider our electronic giving program. We accept donations made from your bank account and credit card or debit cards. It takes just a few minutes to set up a recurring giving plan. To learn more, visit the church website opendoorsumc.org to locate the donation link. We thank you for supporting our mission!
Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Open Doors UMC was held Sunday, February 21, where we reminisced about the year 2020 and acknowledged what a strange and difficult year it was. In a nutshell, our hopes and dreams for 2021 are that we will not just go back to the way things were, but to use what we’ve learned during the pandemic to more fully love our neighbor and spread the Good News of Christ.

This Annual Meeting was an in-person and Facebook Live event, the first event of this kind that Open Doors has tried. A private Facebook group page was created, just for members and regular attendees (see accompanying article), where the meeting was streamed live. It seemed to work as well as expected without any technical problems. We can be thankful that we have the technology now to make this possible for all those who have internet.

Pastor Chris presided over the meeting. There wasn’t much as far as church business went, so Pastor put that aside until the next Ad Council meeting. He then went through the annual report packet, page by page, giving everyone a chance to ask questions. Those watching online were able to ask questions, as well. Sherry Asmus was monitoring the Facebook page to relay any questions and comments to Pastor Chris and to the others in the room.

Copies of the annual report booklet are available to pick up at both campuses. A pdf version is also available by finding the post on the Open Doors UMC Community Facebook Group page and clicking on it.

Join the New Private Facebook Group for Members and Regular Attendees

Just prior to the annual Meeting, you were sent an invitation to join the private Facebook Group, “Open Doors UMC Community.” Only members and regular attendees of Open Doors who have joined the group can see what is posted on the page. This private group is a place where our Open Doors Community can connect with each other, during pandemic times or not, and have conversations, share thoughts, share a recipe, discuss a recent sermon topic or current event, share joys and concerns, etc., etc. Also, information that is only meant for our church family, not the general public, such as our Annual Meeting and reports, can be posted there.

If you have a Facebook account but did not get an invitation to join the group, please become a Facebook friend of “Open Doors UMC” and send a request via Messenger. Sarah can then verify you and send an invitation to join.

That’s the point!
If prayer stands as the place where God and human beings meet, then I must learn about prayer. Most of my struggles in the Christian life circle around the same two themes: why God doesn't act the way we want God to, and why I don't act the way God wants me to. Prayer is the precise point where those themes converge. 

--Philip Yancey
Covid-10 Reopening Status

Still in Orange Phase

It’s good to hear that many people are now able to getting immunized for Covid-19. Some have both shots done, some have one done and one to go, and the majority of us have a while to wait for our turn.

Beginning in February, we re-opened in-person worship in both Kiester and Wells. There are still active cases of Covid-19 in our county, so it’s recommended that those at higher risk should still worship from home.

We are in the Orange Phase, which means that:

- We may worship in person with a limit of 50 people provided that family units are at least six feet apart and attendees wear masks (however, building capacity must not exceed 50 percent). No food or drinks may be served.
- Groups should continue to meet virtually as much as possible, and pastoral care visits should still be done by phone or online as much as possible.
- Small groups of up to 10 people are permitted to gather in-person in large, open areas—preferably outdoors—if everyone is wearing a mask, there is a minimum of six feet between each person, and the gathering area is thoroughly sanitized after each gathering (with special attention to common areas like restrooms). Small groups gathering in a church building should not sing, as singing spreads aerosols that carry the virus a substantial distance.
- High-risk individuals (those over age 60 and/or with underlying health conditions) should continue to stay home and be given options to participate in the life of the church through virtual means.
- Church staff should work from home as much as possible. When in the office persons should wear a mask at all times. Church offices will be open by appointment only.

For the full Open Doors UMC Re-Opening Plan, go to: www.opendoorsumc.org/about and for the Conference Re-Gathering Plan for Churches and related material, go to: https://www.minnesotaumc.org/covid-19

BREAKING NEWS: The Commission on the General Conference announced February 25 its decision to further postpone the 2020 General Conference until Aug. 29 – Sept. 6, 2022, in Minneapolis. In response, the Council of Bishops is calling a Special Session to be convened online on May 8, 2021. The purpose of the Special Session is basically to pass legislation that will allow the church to continue its work until the delayed Conference in 2022.
Church Leadership Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the church leadership meetings are published in the *OneWay*. They will be subject to approval at the next month’s meeting. Meeting packets of Open Doors UMC are located on the literature table (W&K) and are available for taking.

**Ministry Council Minutes – February 8, 2021, 6:30 pm**

Members present: Pastor Chris, Karen Stenzel, Sandy Youngblom, Sherry Asmus, Sarah Hankerson. Location: Zoom video.

**Devotions:** Karen opened with devotions, “Hope for the World,” appropriate for this season of Covid and everything else that is going on. Remember that God is in control.

**Minutes:** M2P Sandy/Sarah to approve the minutes of January 11, 2021, as printed.

**Growing in Love with God and Neighbor**

**Lent:** Ash Wednesday, February 17, will be an online devotion. Pastor knows of no safe way of putting ash on people without getting too close. The online worship will stream to Facebook & YouTube and include prayer/confessional/talk about the meaning of the ashes. The Lenten sermon series will be on Jesus’ “I am” statements and will follow the Lenten study *The God We Can Know*. The sermons will start Feb. 14 and the study on Feb. 24 and go until Easter.

Maundy Thursday/Good Friday – Tentatively, if we stay in Orange Phase, we will have a service in both locations. Palm Sunday – Will try to do as much as normal as possible.

**Women’s Day:** Sandy & Katie are re-thinking when to hold this – summer? Katie will be contacting the retreat lady.

**Caring Ministries:** Always be thinking of things we can do – can even do on the fly. Freezer meals – Sandy just made 19 more, has money from Thrivent to make a few more yet. Looking for more names.

**Children & Youth:** Sandy is planning a day to make snowmen outside the windows at Parkview with families and maybe do painting/clings on their windows. Youth Group is meeting on Zoom still. The Event offered four bonus lessons which she is going to do with the youth. Would like to meet in-person soon. Mission Trip – Considering Prairie River and doing community work or short day trips like to Rochester or The Cities. Looking for ideas of local projects. Sandy checked into going to Ignite Leadership Conference. They won’t stream it live, but will stream to another room at the venue. Unsure about that, thinking maybe have our own little Ignite with special speakers. VBS – Due to Covid, might have to limit numbers. Plan to look at the Railroad kit we got for last year to make it work. We will plan for in-person with a virtual back-up just in case, tentatively for June 8-11.

**Healing a Broken World**

**Lent Offering:** We have a commitment to send the Graners $1,250. Will do a OneWay article about the obligation to support them.

**Winter Mission:** The Graners.

**Reaching New People**

**Community Presence:** USC will be renting the main floor of the Wells church for pre-school screening on February 10-11.

**OTHER:**

**Annual Meeting:** Will be February 21. Sarah is setting up a private Facebook group where we can stream the meeting to. Invitations will go out to all members on Facebook to join the group. Discussed what to call it. Agreed on “Open Doors UMC Community.”

**Next meeting:** Monday, March 8, 2021, 6:30 pm – via Zoom. Recorded by Sarah Hankerson.
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The OneWay is a monthly newsletter for members and friends of Open Doors United Methodist Church.

OPEN DOORS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Central Office
595 1ST AVE SW
WELLS MN 56097

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