

Simsbury United Methodist Church

The Messenger

November 2017

Open hearts, open minds, open doors

The Annual Fall Clean Up Needs YOU!



Calling ALL men, women, and youth! It's time to spruce up the church grounds before the holidays and winter weather blows in! Please mark your calendars and come on out for the Annual Fall Cleanup

on **Saturday, November 11!** Help trim plants, trees, and bushes, and rake up leaves at both the church and the parsonage.

We kick off the day with coffee, donuts, and prayer in the kitchen at 7:30 a.m. and then hit the grounds. Bring your rakes, leaf blowers, hedge trimmers, tarps, and brooms. With a great turn out, we can be done by noon!

Contact Rudy Maurer with any questions.

Annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Service

This year's Simsbury Interfaith Thanksgiving Service will be held on Sunday, November 19, at 7:00 p.m. at the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation. This annual Interfaith Service is sponsored by the churches, synagogues, and houses of worship in Simsbury.

Tom Turkey

Look for Tom Turkey in Wesley Hall on Sunday, November 5! The SUMC Outreach committee and Stephen Ministers are working together to bring Thanksgiving cheer to those in our community who are in need of a boost. Please help us make Thanksgiving extra special for them. Help us by taking a post it note and purchasing the item listed and returning it to Wesley Hall by November 11. Look for more information in the bulletin as we get closer to the holiday. Thanksgiving is early this year.

Don't Be Alone on Thanksgiving

Each Thanksgiving, Woody and Florence open their home to anyone who would like to join them for Thanksgiving. All they ask is that you let them know that you are coming, and whether you will be bringing anything to share at the table.

Important Dates

November 4: Disaster readiness training class

November 5: All Saints Day (celebrated); Day Light Savings ends; Greeting card sale; first rehearsal for Christmas Pageant

November 7: Election Day; South Park Inn; Men's book club, 7:00 p.m. at Dick Gallion's home

November 10: Confirmation class visits local synagogue, 6:00 p.m.

November 11: Veterans Day; Church clean-up day, 7:30 a.m.; Days for Girls, Wesley Hall

November 12: Tom Turkey Food Donations due

November 18: Safe Sanctuaries training

November 19: Interfaith service at Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation, 7:00 p.m.

November 23: Thanksgiving Day!

November 23-24: Office closed

November 25: Simsbury Celebrates! 4:30 p.m.

November 26: Annual Charge Conference, noon

December 2: Days for Girls, Wesley Hall, 9:00 a.m.

Pastor's Page

Years ago when my son was looking at colleges I went with him to a college fair at his school. There were about 40 tables set up in the gym with a different school represented at each with a young enthusiastic representative there to convince us that their school was the best. My son soon deserted me and as I made my way around the room I would ask about the school's history, "aren't you a Presbyterian School?" "Oh no!" came the reply, "we were started by the Presbyterians years ago but we are not 'Presbyterian'." The same reaction came from Methodist, Baptist, even Catholic schools, all played down any affiliation with the faith that had given them their start.

I was reminded of this recently while listening to a speaker from the Hartford YWCA. She was a great speaker telling how the organization helps women gain confidence, how they have day care programs and remedial classes for women and girls. She told of how they were started years ago helping young women who came to Hartford from rural areas. The YWCA gave them a safe place to learn a marketable skill and helped them navigate the world of business. It sounded great, until she said that the original name "Young Women's Christian Association" was being dropped because of the religious stigma. They would now just be YWCA to avoid any religious association.

Really! Being Christian is a "STIGMA" to be avoided? I guess it's understandable. Look at what the media reports about religion and it is usually a blend of ignorance and intolerance, condemnation and abuse of power. Ask most college bound youth what they think about religion and you get pretty much the same perspective. The image of Christianity has been kidnapped by a fringe group who uses and abuses faith to further their own narrow interests.

I like to think, 'but we are not that way.' And that may be true, but how do we change that negative perception? More importantly, how do we become relevant, in a positive way, to the lives of all people? As my uncle was fond of saying, "if people speak ill of you live so that everyone thinks they are a liar." Living out our faith in the world is not easy and it will probably carry a stigma. That is nothing new for Christians. But remember, the name "Methodist" was originally a derogatory one, and Hester Prynne's Scarlet 'A' was transformed from 'adulteress' to 'angel' by the way she lived her life. May we recommit our lives to living out that command of Christ—love God and love your neighbor—everything else is just commentary.

~ Pastor Woody

Confirmation Class Update

Confirmation classes are underway for 8th and 9th graders wishing to become confirmed at SUMC on Pentecost Sunday 2018. The class of 21 students meets most Sunday evenings at 5:30 p.m.

The class will travel to the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 10, to attend the service there. Meet in the SUMC church parking lot at 5:20 pm to carpool over.

Confirmation class will not meet on November 12, 19, or 26, and will resume on December 3.

Simsbury Celebrates!

SUMC will once again host a warming hut during the Simsbury Celebrates! activities on **Saturday, November 25**, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. We welcome back perennial favorite Preiser & O'Brien Band to provide entertainment in the hall. We will also host the Messiah Sing in the sanctuary beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Bell Tower will once again be open for tours beginning at 4:30 and ringers will perform a bell concert midway through the evening affairs. All kinds of fun will be happening here at SUMC so be sure to stop in!

Cooks and coordinators needed

Simsbury Celebrates! On November 25 is always a wonderful time for everyone, but what we **really** need this year is a small team to cook the soups earlier in the day, along with someone to help coordinate the setup, preparation, and cleanup activities for the evening.

If you are willing to help in any way, please let the office know right away at 860.651.3356.

Many thanks to all who support this event! Please watch for food donation and signups on the kiosk in Wesley Hall beginning Sunday, November 5.

Calling All Crafters

We need your help! In December, we will be hosting a Christmas workshop for children to buy Christmas presents for their loved ones.

We would appreciate any homemade crafts like, jewelry, Christmas ornaments, stationery, aprons, totes, etc.

Please contact Heather Kaliden, rockwood7777@yahoo.com, for more information.

The Cookie Caper Is Coming!

The annual Christmas cookie sale returns to SUMC on Saturday, December 9. Bakers (and buyers) are needed! Please plan to bake dozens of your most festive cookies – all money raised goes toward the summer youth mission trip. Last year, we sold out quickly and we raised over \$2100!

Watch for more information in the bulletin and eblast. Please contact Heather Ryan or Missy Iler with any questions.

Greeting Card Sale

Christian greeting cards will be on sale in Wesley Hall following all three worship services on **Sunday, November 5**. Cards are just 50 cents each and all money raised is used to purchase new cards!

Days for Girls

SUMC Days for Girls makes washable, sustainable menstrual kits for adolescent girls in Ghana and Uganda. Kits are cut, sewn, and assembled by volunteers at monthly workshops. Volunteers (men, women, and youth are all welcome!); sewing experience is not needed.

The next workshops will be held **November 11 and December 2, from 9:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m.** Contact Jan Baker to learn more.

LLI Bake Sale

Little Lambs and Ivy wishes to thank the congregation for your generosity during our October Bake Sale! LLI staff bakers and organizers were thrilled with the outpouring of support.

We raised over \$745 and will have such fun purchasing a new carpet for our Pre-K class and additional items for our Wesley Hall play periods. The SUMC congregation always “wows” us and makes this event so much fun for all of us. Thanks again!

~ Joanne Maurer, director

December/January Newsletter Deadline

Please email items for the combined December/January issue of the newsletter to hryan@snet.net by November 26, 2017.

Good Dog, Bad Dog...

Do you remember the old cartoon that had a character with a little angel complete with halo on one shoulder and a devil with a pitchfork on the other, both whispering good or bad things into his ears? Now add two dogs to this picture. One is a nice doggy, the other a nasty mutt; both have him firmly in their teeth by the earlobes and are having a tug-of-war with him, trying to pull him in the direction that the angel or devil are suggesting. The question is: "Which one is winning?" The answer: "Whichever one is being fed the most."

Which leads to another question that emerges whenever we witness an act of violence, hatred, or "pure evil" as the most recent tragedy in Las Vegas was described by our president. That question is: "With what are we feeding ourselves as individuals?... as a society?" In the early days of computers, programmers came up with an acronym, "GIGO," which stood for "Garbage-In, Garbage-Out." In other words, the actions that a computer can perform are only as good (or as bad) as the input it receives. While I believe that human being are much more than the sum total of their cultural environment, I also think that we are profoundly affected by those influences to which we choose to expose ourselves. Heinous events do not occur in a social vacuum. Mass-murderers do not start out as murderers. I believe that series of small steps pave a road that leads to such a horrendous end. In his letter to the early church James says, "*But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; (15) then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.*" This scripture describes a process; a series of bad choices, a progression of small sins that can ultimately lead to a great transgression.

The corporate impact of this most recent tragedy still looms large before us. But the personal tragedy in what happened is that no one stepped in somewhere along the path with that man, saw him going down the wrong road, making so many wrong turns that he became hopelessly lost before he arrived at his final destination.

"But," we think, "it could never happen to me –I could never do something like that gunman in Las Vegas did." Let's remember that Jesus said, that "*whoever hates their neighbor has already committed murder in their heart.*" And so we remind ourselves with some measure of humility, "there but for the grace of God go I..."

But it's equally true that most of us will never go down **that** dark a road. For us, the next question becomes: What are we doing to leave the world a little better than we found it? To create a society where this violence is less likely and less like to occur. I think that it is in the little things we do, the small right choices that we make each day that add up to make a difference over time. We need to starve the bad dog and feed the good dog just a little more each day. If we can do this consistently and collectively, I think we can push back the evil that is pushing at us. In the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans 12:21:

"We will not be overcome by evil, but we will overcome evil with good."

~ Blessings! Pastor Peter

All Saints Sunday is November 5

This year, All Saints Day will be observed on **Sunday, November 5**. This is the time when all three of our services include the lighting of candles for members and friends of SUMC who have died since the last All Saints Sunday (November 2016). If you are unable to attend the services, but would like a copy of the bulletin, please contact the church office.

A Care Receiver's Story: A Steady Reminder of God's Presence

Mark and I had been married 26 years. Our sons were 18 and 20. We loved being parents, but with our younger son graduating high school, we were eagerly anticipating the empty nest and having more time for each other. In the fall, when our younger son started college, Mark began having stomach issues and back pain, which would linger for a few days and then disappear, only to reappear later. He also developed a cough. When his doctor ordered an MRI, the results were devastating—Stage IV pancreatic cancer, already in his liver and both lungs. Mark was only 53.

Our lives were turned upside down. I suddenly found myself trying to provide emotional support to Mark and our sons during the worst experience any of us had ever endured. I wanted and needed to keep myself together to focus on caring for Mark, but I was emotionally drained—full of sadness and terrified of what the future held. I had always been a “take responsibility for everything myself” kind of person. However, I knew I couldn't do this alone. I talked to my pastor about it, and she suggested matching me with a Stephen Minister. I agreed, and less than two weeks after Mark was diagnosed, my Stephen Minister came for the first of her weekly visits.

It's difficult to convey how important this Stephen Ministry relationship was for me. Our pastor was wonderful, and we had an amazing amount of support from many other people, but the time I spent with my Stephen Minister was the only time in the week when I could truly focus on my own needs. She was there just for me. My Stephen Minister let me know that, while she was very concerned for Mark, her role was to be my support—to listen and help me process what I was feeling and going through, without giving advice or telling me what to do. The consistency of our Stephen Ministry relationship was crucial in helping me cope. Her weekly visits became an anchor in my life—something I could rely on when everything else was so uncertain. She was a steady reminder of God's presence, helping me know I was never alone. The time I spent with my Stephen Minister was the only time in the week when I could truly focus on my own needs. She was there just for me.

Although Mark and I chose to talk publicly about his condition, my Stephen Ministry relationship was completely confidential. I knew I could share anything with her, and that's where it would stay. Mark's illness progressed rapidly—ten weeks of treatment, followed by six weeks of hospice, and then his passing. My needs changed as I went from being a wife to being a caregiver to being a grieving widow and dealing with everything that the loss of a spouse entails. Through it all, my Stephen Minister's love and support continued. She was there for me at every stage of my journey. It was never easy, but my Stephen Minister helped me through the most difficult moments of my life.

I really can't say enough about how much I appreciate my church's Stephen Ministry. The compassionate, consistent, and confidential support of my Stephen Minister was so important in helping me cope—and then begin to heal.

To find out more about how a Stephen Minister can help you, call Pastor Woody or Pastor Peter, 860.651.3356, or Barbara Vasquez, Referrals Coordinator, 860.677.4750.

~ Charlotte Ray, Stephen Leader

Wedding Bells

Congratulations to **Marjorie VanDusen** and **Marcio Bolívar Maldonado**, who were married on September 15, 2017.

Outreach Updates

Connecting Neighbors, Ready Church

On **Saturday, November 4, from 9:00 a.m.— 1:00 p.m.** in Wesley Hall, Pastor Tom Vencuss of the NYAC Disaster Relief will be at SUMC to host a session of Connecting Neighbors/Ready Church, a program established by UMCOR and the NYAC to engage local churches in disaster response ministries on a more local level. Following this training, there will be a short Emergency Response Team (ERT) recertification class starting at 1:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending either of these two classes, email Debbie Dunn at dunnds@comcast.net.



Additional ERT Classes

We are looking to add additional classes in November or December for anyone who may be interested in volunteering for Hurricane Harvey or Irma Emergency Response Teams (ERT) Teams in the near future. Most areas requesting ERT teams would like to ensure that members are trained in Safe Sanctuaries guidelines for working with vulnerable people.

Anyone interested in attending are asked to contact the office so that enough materials are available.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria

Recovery efforts are still underway for the victims of these devastating hurricanes. There are several ways you can help with the relief efforts of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria via UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief). UMCOR is the humanitarian relief arm of The United Methodist Church.

You may write a check payable to SUMC (so that your donation appears on your SUMC 2017 giving statement) and SUMC will forward the money through the conference to UMCOR. You may contribute using one of the following UMCOR Relief numbers. The relief number should be written in the memo of your check:

- U.S. Disaster Response #901670 (for both Harvey & Irma)
- International Response #982450 (for both Irma and Maria)
- Relief-Supply Kits (Flood Buckets) #901440

Checks may be left in the plate or mailed to the church office to the attention of Michelle. Any questions, please contact the church office.

The Giving Tree Is Coming

The Giving Tree will go up on Sunday, November 27. This year, gifts will go to families at SUMC and to Covenant to Care for Children (CCC). Please watch for the tree and be sure to take a “tag” to help others this holiday season!

Joanne Maurer and Claudia Nepley are taking over as CCC liaisons from Lori Burrous. Thank you Lori for your many years in this important role, and welcome Joanne and Claudia!

Christmas Pageant 2017

Sunday December 10, 4:00 pm - Pre-Pageant Recital 3:30 pm

This year the children of SUMC will present the annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 10 at 4:00 pm in the sanctuary. It is a traditional pageant with all of the beloved carols you enjoy hearing this time of year. Mary, Joseph, a real baby Jesus, Shepherds, Angels, the three Kings, Prophets and the Angel Gabriel all participate in this wonderful re-telling of the birth of Christ. This is followed by a wonderful reception in Wesley Hall for audience and participants alike! Don't forget to come early and hear our talented children play seasonal songs during the Pre-Pageant Recital. Come one, come all! After all, Jesus *IS* the Reason for the Season!

Christmas Angelicus 2017

"Tis the time to make merry! Christmas in Connecticut would not be the same if you missed one of these priceless performances. Churches and chapels across Northwest Connecticut resonate with the music of the season, as this tradition continues to draw packed houses. An assortment of carols, both old and new, skillfully executed by the pure voices of Chorus Angelicus & Gaudeamus, is at the center of the concert, along with poignant and cheery readings masterfully delivered by actor John McDonough. Pick a location and hurry to get your ticket: sold-out concerts are part of the tradition."

-Joyful Noise, Inc.-

While we will not be a host site this year, choose one of these other glorious venues and experience a Christmas washed in the beautiful sounds of soaring angelic voices and thoughtful and entertaining readings.

Friday, December 15, 7:00 p.m., St Michael's Church, Litchfield

Saturday, December 16, 4:00 p.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, Torrington

Sunday, December 17, 4:00 p.m., Salisbury Congregational Church, Salisbury

Friday, December 22, 7:00 p.m., Collinsville Congregational Church, Collinsville

Saturday, December 23, 7:30 p.m., St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, Hartford

You can purchase tickets by:

1. going on-line: chorusangelicus.com (once on the site, click on "Event Tickets")
2. calling the Joyful Noise office, [860-496-8841](tel:860-496-8841)

Prayer Shawl Ministry

A prayer shawl is a wrap that the ministers give to those who are sick, recovering from surgery, or struggling with personal issue. With the slight chill coming in the air, it is a great time to pick up your needles and create something warm for a friend in need. If you need yarn please let Carol or Carrie and we'll get you going.

Contact: Carol Bressor at 860.653.3555, email: cbressor@gmail.com or Carrie Houghton at 860.651.1645 or email: choughton123@yahoo.com.

Charge Conference

Once each year our District Superintendent, the Rev. Alpher Sylvester, conducts a meeting here at SUMC at which we share with him our hopes and dreams and our fears and concerns. We elect the officers of the church and discuss plans and programs here in the church and in our District and Conference. All members are encouraged to attend and find out more about SUMC and the work of the larger church in the world. The Charge Conference will be held at SUMC at noon on November 26.

All committee and board chairs should have reports submitted to the office by Thursday, November 16.

Financial Reminders

Financial statements will be issued on or about November 15 showing amount pledged and contributed year to date. Most statements are issued electronically by email if we have an email on file for you. Since only one email address can be the primary email address per family/household, please be sure to check with others in your household to see if they received it before contacting the office.

Those without an email address will be mailed. Please complete your financial commitment as soon as possible, so that we may close out the 2017 financial year in a timely manner. Final year end statements used for tax purposes, will be issued at the end of January.

Should you have any questions about your pledge or giving, please contact the office and talk with Michelle. She can be reached at 860.651.3356 x11 or finance@simsburyumc.org.

Prayers and Condolences

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of **Gary Coppola** and his family following the death of his mother, **Blossom Coppola**, on October 16 in California where she resided. She passed on what would have been her husband's 100th birthday. A memorial service will be held at SUMC on Monday, November 13, at 1:00 p.m.

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of **Carol Bressor** following the death of her husband, **Squire Bressor**, on October 28. Visitation will be held at SUMC on Saturday, November 4, beginning at 10:00 a.m. followed by a funeral service at 11:00 a.m. A reception will be held in Wesley Hall following the service.

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of LLI Teacher **Ann Beaudin** following the death of her mother, **Barbara Beaudin**, on October 31. A Memorial Service will be held at Vincent Funeral Home, Simsbury on Saturday, November 11 at 11:00 a.m.



Adult Spiritual Growth: Women's Retreat Report



At the end of September, 20 brave SUMC women made the short journey to Mercy-by-the-Sea retreat center in Madison to spend 24 hours apart from the rest of the world. The theme of the retreat was "Let Go, Let God: A Creative Spiritual Journey."

Most attendees began the experience by donning a henna tattoo. Participants had the chance to participate in workshops centered around spiritual art, writing and music. The beautiful location on the shore offered wonderful artwork, a labyrinth, and (of course) a chance to walk beside the ocean. Everyone returned home refreshed and renewed.

There was so much enthusiasm that we are already exploring the idea of booking the facility for the same weekend next year! Sorry guys— it will again be "ladies

only" – but the SUMC men will have a retreat opportunity in 2018....

~ Lori Garcia

Welcome New Members

Several new families joined SUMC recently.

We welcome **Scott and Erin** Dolch with their children Mason, Harper, and Teagen.

We welcome **Sharon and Michael Carley**, with their children Alex and Ryan.

We welcome **Norma and Wil Gauster**.

We welcome **Geoff Lund** (not pictured)



Circles

In October the **Susanna Circle** enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of the Simsbury Library with Susan Ray, Head of Adult Services. We were amazed by all the library has to offer, from knitting needles to cake pans to power tools and even a 3D printer! Our November meeting will be on Tuesday, November 14, at 7:00 p.m. in the church parlor. We will be filling bags of school supplies for the kindergarteners at Martin Luther King School and making jewelry for the Children's Workshop. We are a friendly group and would love to have any women of the church join us. For information, contact Rolene Johnson at halandrolene@gmail.com or 860.658.0634.



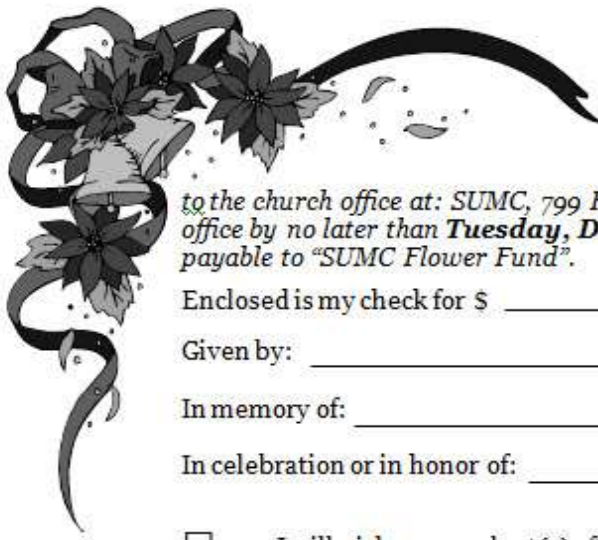
The **Rachel Circle** is scheduled to meet on November 8 at 9:30 a.m. in the Annex.

The **Rebekah Circle** is scheduled to meet on November 16 at noon in the Annex living room.

Prayers and Squares Quilters meet November 7, 10, and 17, at 1:00 p.m. in the Annex Upper Room.

Order Your Poinsettias by December 5

It may seem early to be thinking holiday flowers, but orders will be due before the next issue of the *Messenger* is ready! You can get your order in early using the order form below, but in order forms will also be available at all entrances to the sanctuary around Thanksgiving. Reminders will appear in the Sunday bulletin announcements later in November. The floral display of poinsettias will decorate our sanctuary for services on the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. The sanctuary always looks so beautiful with this red floral display as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Orders and payments should reach the office by Tuesday, December 5.**



Christmas Poinsettia Order Form

Poinsettias are a beautiful way to make our sanctuary festive for services on the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. To order, simply complete the form below and place it in the offering plate with your payment or send the form and check

*to the church office at: SUMC, 799 Hopmeadow St. Simsbury, CT 06070. Your order must reach the office by no later than **Tuesday, December 5**. The cost is \$13.00 per plant. Please make checks payable to "SUMC Flower Fund".*

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for _____ poinsettia plant(s).

Given by: _____

In memory of: _____

In celebration or in honor of: _____

- I will pick up my plant(s) after the 11:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve
- I will pick up my plants on Tuesday, December 26
- Please deliver my plant to a homebound member

Church School News

Hello SUMC Families,

Our church school year is off to a great start! I want to extend a special thank you to all shepherds and teachers for their commitment and talents in our church school. Being new myself to this ministry, I was pleasantly surprised to see this core group of volunteers lead our children during our first rotation of studying Genesis. As we transition on to our second five-week rotation on Joshua, I look forward to what our new group of teachers with their talents and gifts will bring each Sunday morning.

Many thanks to all who stopped in last month for our Godly Play open house. Johnnie Denton took time to share with everyone the materials and layout of the room. She also shared the story of Abraham and Sarah and their journey with God. Please let Johnnie or me know if you'd like to come down and visit the room. We'd love to show you around!

A new Safe Sanctuary meeting will take place on November 18 from 9:00 a.m. till noon in Wesley Hall. Please let me or Michelle Ebert know if you'd like to take the class. Thank you all for your continued support our SUMC church family.

The church school is always looking for new people to help in the ministry. Please contact me at jody@simsburyumc.org or 860.408.1478. We'd love to have you join us!

~ Blessings, Jody

Youth Group Meetings Held Sunday Evenings

Pastor Peter continues to lead weekly youth group gatherings each Sunday evening, immediately following Confirmation Class. Youth in grades 6 – 12 are encouraged to attend (friends welcome!). The group will meet from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the Barn on the Sundays that Confirmation Class is held. (If Confirmation Class is not held on a particular Sunday, youth group will not meet either.) Come join us!

Please contact Pastor Peter if you have any questions about youth group meetings or upcoming youth events at SUMC.

Safe Sanctuaries Training: NEW DATE!

Our Safe Sanctuaries covenant is our pledge to protect children and vulnerable adults in our care as well as those who work with them by understanding and following the covenant guideline with respect to both paid staff and volunteers. The next sessions is scheduled for November 18 from 9:00 a.m. – noon in Wesley Hall. We also invite all who have an interest in deepening their understanding of Safe Sanctuary implementation. Contact Michelle in the office to sign up.

Baptism

Willa Drew Reese, daughter of Megan and Ryan Reese, and younger sister of Harper, was baptized at SUMC on October 29. Godparent is Bridget McKeogh.

The Protestant Reformation

As part of the Church wide book study (*The Great Spiritual Migration* by Brian McLaren), October's worship services started to include the book's theme in the sermons and also in the music and readings as well. On October 1, Rev. Dennis Winkleblack made reference to some of the great changes in the history of Christianity including significant events around 500 years apart. The last one mentioned occurred on October 31, 1517 when Rev. Martin Luther posted (at least according to tradition), his "95 Theses" on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This event has been attributed to being the start of the Protestant Reformation. So as we explore our own faith as what it means to be a Christian in today's world and help in revitalizing our Church, perhaps we can take a step back in time and see what was happening in our history around the time of the Reformation.

To understand the church at the time, it was what we now call the Roman Catholic Church and it operated in an environment where there was not a separation of church and state. A local region may have had a Bishop who was the head of the church, but he also may be the Prince (or like ruler) of the region. Thus the church was very powerful both politically and spiritually. In Italy it ruled over much of the area designated as Papal States, and with the Roman Empire influence still in Western Europe and England, its prior areas continued to be ruled now as part of the church's influence. The church had also been an institution plagued by internal power struggles; at one point within the 1300s and 1400s, three different Popes claimed rule of the church simultaneously. Popes and Cardinals often lived more like kings than spiritual leaders as they had the power to obtain revenue both through the church and their political rule via taxes. They commanded armies, made political alliances (and enemies) and sometimes waged war to increase their holdings. They also sold church offices to the highest bidders, included their family members in various powerful roles and started the practice of selling indulgences. The sale of indulgences was a practice where the church acknowledged a donation or other charitable work with a piece of paper (an indulgence) that certified that your soul would enter heaven more quickly by reducing your time in purgatory. If you committed no serious sins that guaranteed your place in hell, and you died before repenting and atoning for all of your sins, then your soul went to purgatory – a kind of way station where you finished atoning for your sins before being allowed to enter heaven. Thus the situation was becoming more where a church leader was more interested in concentrating on worldly issues and goods for their personal use than for the church and caring for the faithful.

In spite of the corruption within the church at its top level, there were the true believers and practitioners of the faith who maintained the core of the church, with efforts by some leading theologians starting in the 1100s to address the issues they saw with the church leadership. As expected, their opinions were subject to persecution by the Roman Catholic Church and were thus kept isolated or effectively eradicated. One of the early reformers was John Wycliffe, who was a seminary professor at Oxford in England, starting during the 1300s. Wycliffe attacked the privileged status of the clergy, which was central to their powerful role in England and preached against indulgences. He then attacked the luxury and pomp of local parishes and their ceremonies. Wycliffe was also an advocate for translation of the Bible into the language of the people in England. He completed a translation from the Vulgate version (the principal Latin version of the Bible, prepared mainly by St. Jerome in the late 4th century, and adopted as the official text for the Roman Catholic Church) to English in 1382, now known as Wycliffe's Bible. Wycliffe's criticism of the practices of the church was not well received, and he was summoned before the Bishop of London. This event created controversy; a large crowd gathered at the church and quickly became an angry exchange between the two sides – those loyal to the current practices and those who supported Wycliffe. Pope Gregory XI sent a papal bull (A papal bull is a specific kind of public decree issued by a pope of the Roman Catholic church. It is named after the leaden seal (bulla) that was traditionally appended to the end in order to authenticate it.) to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London excommunicating Wycliffe from the church. Wycliffe contested his excommunication and subsequently prevailed only due to Pope Gregory XI's death. Wycliffe continued his criticism of the church as he regarded the scriptures as the only reliable guide to the truth about God and maintained that all Christians should rely on the Bible rather than on the teachings of popes and clerics. After Wycliffe's death in 1384, his teachings and writings were still controversial. In 1415, the Council of Constance declared he was a heretic and banned his writings and effectively excommunicated him retroactively. His works were to be burned, his body removed from consecrated ground and his corpse exhumed and burned and ashes cast in the River Swift.

The article continues on the next page.

The Protestant Reformation, *continued from previous page*

The efforts started by John Wycliffe did not disappear but were picked up by others, most notably by Jan Hus, a Czech priest from Prague. John Wycliffe was considered the first theorist of ecclesiastical Reformation and Jan Hus is considered the first Church reformer. Hus attacked the Church by denouncing the moral failings of clergy, bishops, and even the papacy from his pulpit. He also had obtained some of Wycliffe's writings and he read them from his pulpit. Hus also spoke out against indulgences and asserted that no Pope or bishop had the right to take up the sword in the name of the Church; he should pray for his enemies and bless those that curse him; man obtains forgiveness of sins by true repentance, not money. Three men who followed Hus stated publically that the indulgences were a fraud and were summarily beheaded as this was considered a transgression against the Church. In a similar fate as Wycliffe, Hus was excommunicated and charged with heresy and sentenced to death. In 1415, he was asked to recant his teachings and thus save his life, but his supporters indicated he stated: "God is my witness that the things charged against me I never preached. In the same truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached, drawing upon the sayings and positions of the holy doctors, I am ready to die today." As such, he was executed by being burned at the stake with his ashes thrown in the Rhine River.

Responding with horror to the execution of Hus, the people of Bohemia moved even more rapidly away from Papal teachings, provoking Rome to pronounce a crusade against them that resulted in the Hussite wars. Ultimately, five crusades were unsuccessful, with a treaty reached in 1436 and the Czech founding of the Hussite church.

Although all writings by Wycliffe and Hus were declared to be destroyed by the Church, not all were. Around 1450, the Gutenberg press came into existence, which provided a means to widely distribute printed materials. One of those who obtained writings by Wycliffe and Hus was Martin Luther. Luther was born in 1483 and his father wanted him to become a lawyer. In keeping with his father's wishes, after completing his Master's degree in 1505, he entered law school. While on a trip home during a thunderstorm, a lightning bolt hit very close to him and he felt it was a divine sign that he was spared and affirmed he would become a monk. His father was furious, but he quickly devoted his life as a monk in the Augustinian order by devoting himself to fasting, long hours in prayer, pilgrimage and frequent confession. He subsequently was ordained and started teaching theology at the University of Wittenberg along with continuing his education. In 1512, he completed his Doctorate of Theology and became a regular member of the faculty. Although considerable time had elapsed since challenges against indulgences by Wycliffe and Hus, no change had occurred within the Roman Catholic Church. In 1516, the Church sent an emissary to Germany to sell indulgences that were to support the Church in Rome but also the church in Germany through the Archbishop in Mainz. On October 31, 1517, Luther posted what is typically known as his "95 Theses" on the doors of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg. The actual title was the *Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, which he also sent directly to the Archbishop of Mainz. Luther felt that he was not confronting the Church but saw his disputation as a scholarly objection to church practices. With the ability to print copies, by 1518, his "95 Theses" had been distributed all over Europe.

The Archbishop of Mainz did not reply to Luther's letter containing the "95 Theses." He had the theses checked for heresy and in December 1517 forwarded them to Rome. He needed the revenue from the indulgences to pay off a papal dispensation for his tenure as archbishop. Over the next three years, the Pope deployed a series of papal theologians and envoys against Luther, which served only to harden the reformer's anti-papal theology. Luther's boldest assertion in the debate was that Matthew 16:18 does not confer on popes the exclusive right to interpret scripture, and that therefore neither popes nor church councils were infallible. For this, Luther was branded a new Jan Hus. In 1520, the Pope sent Luther a papal bull that indicated unless he recanted his beliefs, he would be excommunicated. Luther publicly set fire to the papal bull and he subsequently was excommunicated in 1521. In a later trial that year, he defended his writings by stating: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen." The verdict was that he was a heretic and his writings banned and that he was to be punished accordingly. Luther took refuge at Wartburg Castle where he was protected by followers and continued his writings. He later returned to Wittenberg and was accepted back to continue his efforts at reform. By 1526, Luther was formulating a new church that reflected his teachings.

Historians usually date the start of the Protestant Reformation to the 1517 publication of Martin Luther's "95 Theses" and its ending with the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, which allowed for the coexistence of Catholicism and Lutheranism in Germany. Many more reformers came later, but Martin Luther's efforts were the true beginning.

~ Jim Ray, SUMC Historian

Day Light Saving Time Ends on 11/5

Are you ready for an extra hour of sleep? Be sure to “fall back” on **Sunday, November 5**, by setting your clocks back an hour for some extra shut-eye.



**This newsletter is published 10 times a year by
The Simsbury United Methodist Church
799 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070
860.651.3356
www.simsburyumc.org**

**Rev. Woodrow Eddins, Senior Pastor
Rev. Peter Preiser, Assistant Pastor
and Youth Ministries Director**

**Office Manager and Church Secretary
Webmaster and E-Blast Coordinator:
Michelle Ebert**

**Adult Music Director: Yves Venne
Children/Youth/CAYA Music Director: Dorothy Cowles
Director, Little Lambs & Ivy: Joanne Maurer
Church School Coordinator: Jody Swan
Newsletter Editor: Heather Ryan**



Simsbury United Methodist Church
799 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

[Recipient]

Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4