



Confirmation Program

By Pastor Kathy

In the Prairie Lakes Parish tradition, students who are at least 7th grade are eligible to begin our Confirmation experience which is a two-year program. This year will be new. I'm hoping that it will be a time of getting to know one another as we consider our faith in relation to the many things that impact our lives.

We will meet monthly and have church and community members help us consider a variety of topics and how faith is experienced. For example, our first time together will be a discussion of Faith and Justice. Cindy Saufferer, a member of our Blooming Grove congregation and the newly appointed Parish Justice Coordinator will lead a conversation around justice; what justice is and how our faith is lived with justice. Cindy will be consecrated as a United Methodist Women Deaconess in the coming Spring.

Some of the other topics we'll experience will be:

- Faith and Grief
- Faith and Music
- Faith and Career
- Faith and Fun
- Faith and Friendships
- Faith and Social Media
- Faith and My Confirmation

Karen Olson is my co-leader for our Parish Confirmation experience. Karen has a heart for our youth! Any family members are welcome to any of our gathering times. I'm looking forward to the possibilities and fellowship this year!

We know that COVID is still very real. At this time, the Parish Leadership Team decided that it is up to each family to decide what is right for their children. Mask wearing and vaccinations are family decisions. Karen and I support your decisions. We are both available anytime if you have questions or concerns.

Confirmation Class



Our meeting dates will be:

1. September 19, 2021 Faith and Justice at Saufferer farm-Cindy Saufferer
2. October 17, 2021 Faith and Fun
3. November 21, 2021 Faith and Grief at Dennis Chapel-Aaron Omtvedt
4. No meeting in December
5. January 16, 2022
6. February 20, 2022
7. March 20, 2022
8. April 2022 Faith and My Confirmation at El Molino's WV-Pastor Kathy
(2nd year Confirmation)

We will meet in different places that will facilitate our topic. Our September meeting will be at Brad and Cindy Saufferer's farm. I am happy to pick up youth and drop them off if need be. You will receive email reminders of our meetings the week prior.

Along with our monthly meetings, we like to see Confirmation students in worship when it's possible. Our Sunday online worship services are available at 8:00 each Sunday morning on our Prairie Lakes Parish of the United Methodist Church Facebook page. They remain available until Facebook archives them. When youth and families are busy on Sunday mornings, I hope there's a chance for them to view at least ½ of the service—always including the sermon time.

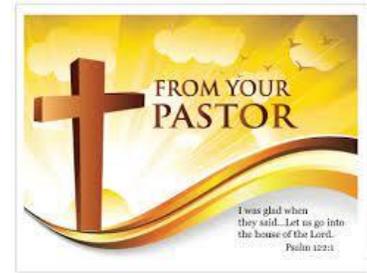
May through August for first year confirmands is a time for a service project of their choice. (A few examples: help out at your church or community's summer events, creating artwork for one of the parish churches, record a Scripture reading for one of our online services.)

As I get more information about our meeting locations, I will be sure to pass that along to all of you. I'm looking forward to the holy moments of our gatherings.

If you have questions, contact Pastor Kathy or Karen. We are happy to help. Feel free to call, text, or email.

Pastor Kathy
507-382-2483 kking5@hickorytech.net

Karen Olson
507-661-4818 karenjoolson@yahoo.com



Called to Appreciate

Numbers 6:24-26

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace. NIV*

It is time to write our September newsletter article already. It is incredible that our summer is quickly passing by but as I gave Mikayla a hug and wished her my best, I was reminded that our Alexia returned to St. Scholastica Friday (August 20th) too. God blesses our community with our young people and we wish them all our best as those who graduated this past year and prior years seek the education that will lead to careers for each of them.

One of the recent conference newsletters provided the link to an article that spoke to the hearts of some in leadership roles in our parish. "Don't Count Out Small, Rural Churches" spoke to the good things happening in churches like those who make up our Prairie Lakes Parish. The article made three important points:

1. Small, rural churches can still thrive if they focus on the needs of their community.
2. Fixation on youth, contributions and attendance can be counterproductive.
3. Rural churches have a better chance if they work from a sense of possibility rather than fear.

How good it is to see in print some of the good things that have long been a part of our three churches but to also be reminded how our individual communities can better focus on what our futures can be. These points lead me to ask questions.

1. Are we focusing on the right needs in our work in our communities?
2. Are we being more intentional about attracting new members than we are in caring for our members who continue their faith journeys in our midst?
3. Can we move to "a sense of possibility rather than fear?"

In the months to come, perhaps we can bring these questions to mind in our gathering. We have such rich histories in our communities. We need to seek God's grace as we walk as disciples of Christ to appreciate one another in what we do and who we are.

Know that your Pastor and her chauffer appreciate each one of you. You fill our hearts with your caring and your grace. The words from the "benediction" provided in Numbers 6 are those that remind each of us of how it is that we can provide words of comfort in our gathering and in our leave-taking. It is my wish that as we think about who we are as "the Church", that we hold one another graciously and kindly. In these last days of summer and those of early fall, may the Lord bless you-always. May his face be turned toward you, graciously providing you with his peace.

Live kindly!

Pastor Kathy

September 2021

Blooming Grove
Morning Worship...8:15 am

Janesville
Morning Worship 10:45 am

Waterville Evangelical
Morning Worship...9:30 am

<p style="text-align: center;">Parament Colors</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The parament color for September is green.</p>			1	2	3	4
					Pastor's Day Off	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
			7 pm BG Council Meeting at Brian Kanne's garage			Run for the Loaves and BBQ Cook-off
					Pastor's Day Off	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<p>Holy Communion</p> 				6:00 pm "Brew and Bible" at Half Pint Brewing		
					Pastor's Day Off	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<p>Confirmation Class at Cindy Saufferer's</p>						
					Pastor's Day Off	
26	27	28	29	30	31	
					Pastor's Day Off	<p>Save The Date</p> <p>Sunday, October 3rd</p> <p>Pizza Farm Worship</p>

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Sunday Worship 8:15 a.m.

Wed	8	7:00 pm	Council Meeting at Brian Kanne's
Sat	11	8:30 am	Run for the Loaves
Sat	11	12:00	BBQ Cook off
Sun	12	8:15 am	Communion Sunday
Thurs	16	6:00 pm	Brew & Bible at "Half Pint Brewery"
Sun	19		Confirmation Class at Cindy Saufferer's



1	Char Frankenberry	9	Stefanie Morgan
2	Don Frankenberry	11	Jake Goldsmith
2	Allison Janke	11	Deecy Jesse
2	Walt Nagel	14	Zander Morgan
3	Hazel Saufferer	15	Gerard LaFond
3	Jim Southworth	15	Jessica Buchholz
6	Dick Fisher	15	Kourtney Remund
6	Annabel Buchholz	16	Bradley Christesen
7	Nathan Carty	16	Patti Ellingson
7	Jeremiah Mahler	16	Penelope Nicholson
		25	Emily Engebretson
		26	Carolyn Kanne
		26	Jennifer Kanne
		27	Denise Combs
		28	Alex Spinler

Happy Anniversary

4	David & Jenny Kanne
14	Justin & Kristin Krell
15	Gil & Beth Christesen
15	Brad & Cindy Saufferer
17	Jim & Kristin Nagel
17	Tyler & Alex Morgan
19	Dan & Pam Carty
20	Michael & Ashley Pitzer
22	Walt & Holly Nagel
22	Jim & Mary Karsten
28	Jerry & Patti Ellingson
28	Brandon & Emily Church



Thank You!

Thank you from Emily Engebretson and her mom - Carolyn (Karsten) Engebretson for our Sr. Recognition Sunday: "Thank you for honoring Emily in church and for the *Jesus Calling for Graduates* book. We will read it in the near future. Also,

thank you for the pretty crocheted cross. Emily will be attending the Secondary Transition Education Program in Faribault."

Treasurer's Report

July 27—August 28, 2021



General Budget Income

\$ 3,315.00

Expenses

Pastor's wage: July, August	3,189.40
Century Link	50.68
Lawn services	735.00
Pirkle Gas: Contract Fuel	<u>2,398.50</u>
Total Budget Expenses	\$ 6,373.58

(Net Budget Income: - \$ 3,058.58)

Other Income Received

Hay Sold	100.00
Cemetery	150.00
UMW Fish Fry Income	215.00

Building Addition

Restoration Income	1,280.00
Nail Cross Income	200.00
Fish Fry Income	<u>1,934.00</u>
Total Restoration Income	3,629.00

Restoration Fund Balance	\$33,351.19
Building Addition Loan	
Balance to date	\$288,199.65
Monies Dispersed	\$60,000.00
Monthly Loan Payment	\$2,585.00



Congratulations to **Ron Engebretson** who was named the winner of the MN DNR Walleye stamp for 2022 with his gouache and colored pencil painting of a walleye about to take the bait. Ron has painted for many years of his life and has competed in many different stamp contests like the Trout Stamp, Duck Stamp, Pheasant Stamp, Turkey Stamp plus more. Ron is married to Carolyn (Karsten) and is Carol's son-in-law.

Please pray for the following persons and situations shared publicly within our community of BGUMC



Note from Pastor Kathy King:

Please call or text me if you would like me to visit or if there is a prayer concern that you prefer to keep private. We are a community strengthened by the power of prayer. We are stronger when we intercede on the behalf of our brothers and sisters in the faith. Please know that does not mean your name needs to be on a public prayer list. It means that your Pastor can pray for you and help you in any way you define.

- The family of Dorothy Gasner (married to Carol Karsten's cousin) as they mourn Dorothy's passing.
- A work friend of Carolyn Kanne's, who was the victim of a home invasion that has shattered the sense of peace and safety of "home" that she and her family have treasured for so many years.
- Chuck and Linda Danks' daughter-in-law and grandson, who are both battling COVID.
- For students, teachers, and all staff, as our young people return to school/college, all navigating the added stresses and uncertainties of COVID.
- Karen Olson, of Waterville EUMC, and her family, as they mourn the passing of Karen's sister.
- The two-year-old grand-daughter of a co-worker of Marlis Mahler, who was the victim of a random shooting, in which a bullet flew through her body, causing severe damage along the way. Pray for her medical staff and family members as they care for her in her long hospitalization and recovery.
- Marge, Cindy Saufferer's mom, who is experiencing ongoing health concerns.
- Pastor Kathy's mom, Dee - and all of Dee's family - as Dee continues in hospice care at the skilled nursing care facility in Janesville.
- Del, of Janesville UMC, his family, and his doctors, as Del journeys through heavy-hitting rounds of treatments for an aggressive cancer.
- For those struggling with dementia, as well as their caregivers who journey that road with them, and their doctors, who seek possible options to help along the way.
- For all affected by COVID in one way or another.
- For all facing conflict, war, and terror. For those in the path of severe weather, fire, and famine-like conditions. For all working to provide protection, assistance, relief, and rescue to those whose lives are in such danger.

- All in our faith community who privately hold heavy concerns in their hearts. Help us to reflect God's love and care through our words and deeds that they may know BGUMC as a place of solace, comfort, and trust.

In Sympathy

Eunice Gasner, 97, passed away August 10th at Altru Hospital in Grand Forks, ND, where she was lovingly provided palliative care after complications post hip surgery. She is Carol Karsten's sister-in law who was married to Leslie Gasner, Carol's brother. She is survived by a daughter, Susan Arneson, and a son, LeRoy. Per Eunice's wishes, there will be no memorial service. If you wish, you may send condolences in care of LeRoy Gasner, 9650 County 17, Langdon, ND 58249. LeRoy made the large wooden cross hanging at the front of the altar. Many of the church group know the family. As a "neighborhood note", the Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm is part of Eunice's home farm!



Sunday Morning Worship Looking Ahead

Sunday, September 5th - Guest Leader

Pastor Kathy will be on vacation. Dave Wollin, of Waterville EUMC, will lead morning worship for the churches of the Prairie Lakes Parish - each at their own location and standard time. Please welcome him to the "early morning sun" of BGUMC!

Sunday, September 12th - Holy Communion

We invite you to partake in Holy Communion during our 8:15 morning worship. Our method of distribution will be determined the week prior, to take into consideration COVID developments.

Sunday, October 3rd - Pizza Farm Worship

Join us for our Prairie Lakes Parish combined worship service and celebration of World-Wide Communion at the Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm. Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy the Pizza Farm's morning beauty in the fellowship of folks from all three churches in our parish. Stay after worship for more fellowship and pizza for lunch! Thanks go to Emily and Bill of the Pizza Farm for their warm welcome and hospitality.



Half Pint Fish Fry Success
By Brad Saufferer

The fish fry held at the Half Pint Brewery on the 15th of August to raise money for the church addition turned out to be great success. Brad Spinler and his fish fry crew, he refers to them as his brain trust, once again cooked up some very taste walleye and near perfect French fries. While we do not have an exact number, we estimate between one hundred fifty and one hundred seventy meals were served. A total of \$2,149.00 was raised through a free will offering, with ten percent going to the UMW. The ladies of the UMW along with others baked cookies for dessert and as always, they were very tasty and completely calorie free as they were served at a church function. I was once told by a Methodist Minister any food served in a church basement was calorie free and I assume it's the same for any church event.

I'd like to thank those who volunteered to help at the event. There were close to twenty, too many to list, but as always with a Blooming Grove event everything ran smoothly and those being served were well satisfied. I would also like to thank Mike and Warren McQuery from the Half Pint. They were invaluable in helping plan the event and were great hosts during the event.

Keep your eyes open for future fund-raising events. I'm sure most will involve great food and good fun.



Thank you to all from BGUMC who made our Fish Fry a success

by planning the event, making arrangements with Half Pint Brewery, creating and distributing advertising, making and donating food and supplies (including 400 cookies, the fish, and all the fixings), providing equipment, working at the event, and attending the event! Between all of these aspects, at least 47 folks with direct connections to BGUMC were involved! Wow!

**“Brew and Bible”
At Half-Pint Brewing Company**

6:00 P.M. - Thursday, September 16, 2021
Gather at the big table reserved for this group
Wrap-Up will be around 7:15 or 7:30

For more information, contact
Pastor Kathy King @ 507-382-2483
kking5@hickorytech.net

Sunday School News

Typically by this time, the Education Committee is getting ready for Rally Sunday and the start of Sunday school. However, we all know this isn't a typical year! The Minnesota Conference of the United Methodist Church recently moved congregations back to the Yellow Phase (indoor masking, social distancing, no indoor group singing), due to the very highly contagious Delta virus. Education Committee members have discussed how best to handle Sunday school at this time. Since the safety of our younger members is of key importance, and to keep everyone involved with Sunday school safe, the committee decided we will not be having Sunday school at this time. This allows us to monitor the first few weeks of public school to see how things go there. The Education Committee will continue to evaluate the situation on a monthly basis and inform you of any changes.



Council Meeting

Our next BGUMC Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 8th, at 7:00 P.M. We will meet in Brian and Carolyn Kanne's garage. Please bring your own lawn chair!

**BGUMC Building Project
We Need Your Help!**

For years, we have dreamed of creating an accessible entryway at BGUMC that provides inclusion for all who gather to soak in stories of God's love and that safely sends us back into the world to carry that love, care, and inclusion to others. We are seeing exciting progress - made by our building contractors, as well as local craftsmen and women, and our own BGUMC Trustees. We thank them for their commitment to this project.

We're now at the point where we actively need your help! We invite, encourage, and welcome you to become part of the village that makes our addition a reality by joining in the following:

- Contact Brad Saufferer to help with weekly construction dust clean-up each Saturday at 9:00 A.M.
- Contact Pastor Kathy King to become part of a brainstorming team for fund-raising events and activities to be carried out by the congregation.
- Support the building project with your ongoing donations - mailed to BGUMC at PO Box 171, Medford, MN 55049-0171. Enter "Restoration Fund" in the memo line.

Run For The Loaves Registration Form

Blooming Grove UMC Fall Food Shelf Fundraiser



Saturday, September 11th, 2021
4 Mile Run/Walk
Kids 1/4 Mile Run

Registration: 8:30 am
Kids 1/4 Mile Run: 9:15 am
4 Mile Walk: 9:30 am
4 Mile Run: 10:00 am

Registration Fee: \$25.00
Kids Run (12 & Under) \$3.00
Entry fee will be waived if participant submits a
donation of \$50 or more.

“Run 4 the Loaves” T-Shirts will be available on the day of the race for those who register by September 3rd for the 4-mile run/walk. Be sure to indicate your T-shirt size. T-shirts for those who register after the deadline may be sent at a later date. If no size is indicated, the cost of the shirt will be donated.

Prizes: An awards ceremony will commence when the last participant finishes. Awards will be given to the top age-group finishers and the best over-all male/female. A special award will be presented to the participant who raises the most donations for the Food Shelves.



Age Groups:

Under 12 **13-19** 20-29 **30-39** 40-49 **50-59** 60-69 **70+**

Additional Info: Everyone will receive a number at registration which must be worn during the race. Restrooms will be available at the event site. Water stops will be available on the course with refreshments waiting at the finish line.

Course: Utilizing both paved and gravel roads, through the fields of ripening corn and soybeans, the race will begin and end at the Blooming Grove United Methodist Church, located on the Steele/Waseca County line.

Questions: Contact Brad Saufferer
Phone: 507-363-6579
E-mail: runfortheloaves@yahoo.com

Last Name _____ Sex _____

First Name _____ Birthdate _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email: _____

Food Shelf: I wish to support _____

T-Shirt Size S M L XL

Waiver: I understand that running/walking a road race is a potentially dangerous activity. I should not enter and run/walk unless I am medically able and properly trained. **I understand that entry fees and donations are non-transferable. I also understand that if the race is cancelled due to inclement weather, my registration fee and/or donation will not be reimbursed but donated to the Food Shelve indicated above.** I assume all risks associated with participation in the event including but not limited to: falls, contact with other participants or spectators, the effect of the weather including heat or cold temperatures, traffic or conditions of the roads, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. Having read this waiver and knowing these facts and in consideration of our accepting my entry, I for myself and anyone entitled to act for my behalf, waive and release Blooming Grove United Methodist Church from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my participation in this event even though that liability might arise out of negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons named in this waiver. **I have read and agree to the above.**

Signature _____

(Parent or guardian if under 18)

Date: _____

Entry Fee _____

Food Shelf Donation (\$50+) _____

For directions to Blooming Grove UMC
“The Two-Steepled Church on the Prairie”
go to www.bloominggroveumc.org

Mail this form/entry fee to:
Blooming Grove UMC
PO Box 171
Medford, MN 55049-0171

Make checks payable to:
Blooming Grove UMC
Denote “Food Shelves” on
the memo line

Three Generations at Work

By Brad Saufferer



The Sanctuary is repainted. We started with the south wall, which was freshly sheet rocked, and that took about a half a day. Linda Kosel, Kelly Prchal, Mikayla Janke, Mike Nicholson, and Cindy Saufferer started working at nine o'clock and were done

by one o'clock. Some found the top of the scaffolding was not for them but Kelly and Mikayla, while not exactly comfortable, got the job done.

The next week work started at seven o'clock with the hope of getting another wall done. Kris Nagel showed up with pizza for lunch and announced she was taking the rest of the day off we should finish the job. The same crew was there with the exception that Callie Nagel replacing Mikayla and Raelyn, the Janke family was taking Mikayla to college, and Linda Danks was there working hard and keeping Mike and me in line.

It was hot in the church that day. My daughters once told me they didn't sweat, they glistened. There was a lot of glistening going on. We had the whole sanctuary painted by five-thirty. Callie wowed us by her dexterity and balance at the top of the scaffold, without her up there it would have taken much longer.

Someone snapped a picture of the front of the sanctuary while the painting was going on. After looking at the picture they realized they had captured three generations at work. Linda Kosel at the bottom, Kris Nagel in the middle, and fearless Callie at the top. It speaks volumes about a church that has three generations volunteer for a less than glamorous task like painting.

We should all thank those involved with the painting. The primer, paint, and all the equipment used was donated along with all the labor. The church looks fresh and beautiful, and it was all accomplished by good people from a congregation of great people.

The Pastor's Kid

By Brad Saufferer

A couple of weeks ago I was trying to nail down when the tapers would be at the church to tape the sheet rock and get it ready for painting. Ammon from Eagle Ridge Construction admitted he was having trouble getting a date from the tapers and wondered if I knew of anyone local. I told him I could talk to the pastor's kid who taped the back wall of the sanctuary and ask him if was available. When I say the pastor's kid, I'm talking about her son Aaron who is forty give or take, six foot and a bunch tall and hangs sheet rock for a living. Aaron is an impressive guy. Long story short, Aaron taped the addition, got it done in less than half the time of Ammon's crew and did a superb job.

The reason I mention this is that the Lord works in mysterious ways. We needed a skilled craftsman, the pastor had one who is her son. We needed the job done quickly, Aaron worked on his own time after work and got it done in no time. They say behind every great man is a greater woman, and God had Aaron meet Trista, who came with him and helped with everything. As an aside, Aaron and Trista's first date was to Menards, he gets his romantic side from his dad. What I'm trying to say, our church is truly blessed, God provided us with a loving pastor and a talented family.

The painter shows up at nine-thirty on Monday. There is much to be done, but we are getting closer to completion. Keep the project in your prayers and say a thank you for skilled craftsman and all the people that are making this project a success.



The bright altar after being painted.

Limited Edition Keepsake Square Nail Crosses

Heartfelt thanks to Linda Kosel, one of our artistic BGUMC members, who converted a supply of the original square nails from the Immanuel building portion of BGUMC into 30 Limited-Edition Keepsake Crosses! Each cross is available for purchase at \$50 - with all funds going to our Accessibility Building Project. There are only a few left! Contact Chery Southworth, Judy Mahler, or Brad Saufferer if you, or someone you know, is interested. Please make all donations out to BGUMC - with a note in the memo area of "Keepsake Cross". Thank you.



Building Accessibility Project Grant Exploration

Through connections made during our MN United Methodist Annual Conference (held in June), we learned of several organizations within our conference whose focus is to support and serve Minnesota United Methodist churches that are taking bold steps to better connect with their community and welcome new people. In early August, we completed applications and supporting information for a grant and loan with one of these organizations - MN Builders' West. They are reviewing our materials and will make their decision by mid-September. We are also in contact with MN Builders' East, who will circle back with us after they finish re-organizing their group this fall. Please hold the review committee members in your prayers as they consider our project, as well as those of other United Methodist churches in the state.

Kamisamba Farm - 2021 BGUMC Mission

Join us as we support the important work of the Kamisamba Farm and Training Center (KFTC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Here's how!

- Learn more about the KFTC in each month's Kamisamba Farm Corner - here in the Visitor.
- Drop off weekly offerings of loose change and/or other larger donations for the KFTC in our "Noisy Can" offering receptacle.
- Support the KFTC in your Advent, Christmas, and Year-End gifting.
- Pray for the KFTC leaders, staff, and community members who are integral parts in sharing God's love, justice, and caring for neighbor.

For donations that you would like noted on your annual BGUMC giving statement, please write a check (to BGUMC) or place your donation in an offering envelope with your name identified on the front. On each, please indicate "Kamisamba Farm".

Kamisamba Farm Corner September

Trainees attending crop production sessions at Kamisamba Farm receive hands-on instruction in the fields.



In the province that includes most of the North Katanga area - where the Kamisamba Farm is located - 80% of the population lives below the poverty line. Farming is the main source of income, and 90% of the population uses traditional subsistence agriculture to survive. Most cannot produce enough to feed their families, afford basic education for their children or medical care. Many people survive on one meal a day.

Lorraine Charinda is a missionary from Zimbabwe, assigned to Kamisamba Farm as an agriculturist and rural economic development specialist. She attended [Africa University](#) for her Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture and natural resources and the University of Namibia for a Master of Science in agricultural economics. Lorraine arrived at Kamisamba in 2018, thinking she was taking over a fully functioning farm. When she arrived, she discovered a couple of workers, dilapidated buildings, four pigs and half an acre of vegetables cultivated on the 500-acre farm. Three years later, under Lorraine's leadership, the farm is fully functional. They have 50 pigs, chickens, ducks, goats and fish ponds - and care for more than 35 acres planted in vegetables, grains and fruit trees.

The Kamisamba Farm now shares the skills and knowledge they have gained by serving as a teaching farm. Their farm includes a teaching center, with dormitories for up to 40 people. Participants come to scheduled training programs for a few days or a few months to learn better and more efficient ways to raise food. The farm also holds "train the trainers" events with participants sent from each surrounding district to learn the basics of starting, caring for and harvesting more productive gardens. They then take the knowledge back to their districts to train others. In addition, they've held trainings in 21 of North Katanga's 24 districts, and provided seeds, animals, small fish or saplings to participants. Training onsite in communities helps Kamisamba workers discern which type of production has the best chance to thrive in a given area. After training, they visit again to accompany people through the first growing season. As farmers experience increased yields, training on marketing and conserving seed for the next season helps them gain perspective on farming as a business beyond subsistence.

August 28, 2021

TO: Congregations of Blooming Grove UMC, Janesville UMC, and Waterville Evangelical UMC
FROM: Prairie Lakes Parish Leadership Team -- Pastor Kathy, Council Chairs, and PPRC Members of each Church
RE: **August 17th COVID-19 Updates for Churches of the Prairie Lakes Parish (PLP)**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our PLP Leadership Team shares with you here updated COVID-19 news from the MN Conference of the United Methodist Church. Thank you for your continued patience as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 together!

MN Conference of the United Methodist Church (AKA “MN Conference”) Recommendation

In August, the MN Conference moved the dial back to Yellow in their COVID-19 Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches, due to substantial community transmission of the delta variant. Link here for Bishop David Bard’s 8/11/21 letter regarding reinstatement of the Yellow Phase guidelines - plus a full description of the Yellow Phase: <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/newsdetail/bishops-pastoral-letter-covid-precautions-amid-surge-in-cases-15355956> . Both documents will be included in our September newsletters.

On a high level, the MN Conference Yellow Phase includes the following:

- When a county surpasses a 5 percent COVID-19 positivity rate, United Methodist Churches in that county are asked to reinstate social distancing, indoor masking, and no indoor congregational singing.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CHURCHES IN OUR PRAIRIE LAKES PARISH?

With Waseca and Steele Counties consistently ranking far above the 5% COVID-19 positivity rate, and Rice and LeSueur Counties ranking above 5% as well, beginning Sunday, August 22nd, we will implement the MN Conference COVID-19 Yellow Phase Guidelines in the manner described below.

Outdoor Worship

When the weather allows, each of our three churches will hold their Sunday morning worship services outdoors - seated in lawn chairs - gathered around Pastor Kathy. Each church will provide music as best fits their location.

Indoor Worship

When weather conditions do not allow for outdoor worship, we will hold in-person worship indoors, following the social distancing and singing guidelines of the MN Conference. We will strongly recommend, but not require, that masks be worn. Please keep in mind, and hold in your hearts, our young people who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated.

Ongoing Updates

Our Prairie Lakes Parish Leadership team will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely and follow MN Conference guidelines, as well as local protocols, making adjustments as needed on a weekly basis. We will continue to follow the three simple rules as laid out by our MN Conference:

- We are a people that do no harm.
- We are a people that do all the good we can.
- We are a people that stay in love with God.

Bishop David Bard's pastoral letter: COVID precautions - move to Yellow Phase - amid surge in cases



August 11, 2021

Bishop David Bard has turned the dial on the Minnesota Conference's Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches from blue to yellow. Below is a letter to Minnesota United Methodists explaining the reason for the change and offering specific guidelines:

Dear Friends in Christ in the United Methodist Churches of MN,

I greet you in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.

I hope the summer has afforded you opportunities for rest, refreshment, and renewal. I hope you have been able to enjoy the beauty of our state. I hope you have been able to connect with family and friends, perhaps after a long absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The summer began with deep hope that we were putting this pandemic in the rear-view mirror. People were being vaccinated at rapid rates. Case rates, test positivity rates, hospitalizations and deaths were all declining. Yet this pandemic has been filled with unpredictability, and we are once again entering a new phase. Vaccination rates have slowed considerably and a new variant of the coronavirus, the Delta variant, has been spreading rapidly. The Delta variant is more easily transmitted, and there have been breakthrough cases among those who have been vaccinated. The latest research indicates that vaccinated people, though remarkably protected from being infected with COVID, are still able to become infected. When they are infected, they are less likely to suffer severe illness or be hospitalized, yet appear able to spread the virus to others. The result of the slowing of vaccinations and the spread of the Delta variant is that test positivity rates are up—now surpassing 5 percent in Minnesota (with some counties substantially higher), case rates are up, and hospitalizations and deaths are increasing, particularly in those places where fewer people have been vaccinated.

I know that, in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ, you want to do all you can to promote public health, further the common good, and care for the well-being of others. How might we do that in this new phase of the pandemic?

First and foremost, if you have not been vaccinated and are eligible to receive a vaccine, do it. It is the single most important thing you can do to care for yourself and for others. Those currently suffering the most serious illness right now are the unvaccinated. Of those who are currently hospitalized with COVID, well over 90 percent are people who have not been vaccinated. Please get vaccinated. Encourage your fellow-church members to get vaccinated.

Because the positivity rate has exceeded 5 percent for the state as a whole, which means there is substantial community transmission, we are moving the dial back to yellow in our Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches. We understand there is great variation across our state in terms of community transmission and vaccination levels among your congregants, but please use caution. **When your county surpasses a 5 percent positivity rate (check your county's current rate here), we ask that you reinstate the yellow phase guidelines of social distancing, indoor masking, and no congregational singing.** After vaccinations, masking and social distancing are the next best tools we have for slowing the spread of the coronavirus, and slowing the spread also prevents the virus from developing into new variants. And of course, outdoor gatherings are considerably safer than indoor gatherings, so that is a great option as weather permits.

Friends, we are not where we had hoped to be at this point in the summer. We had hoped vaccination rates would have outpaced virus variations. We had hoped that our masks could be put in the bottom of our drawers or in the back of our closets. Yet I believe that by God's grace we can muster the resilience, the kindness, and the determination to do what needs to be done to get past this pandemic. As followers of Jesus, we can lead in promoting public health, furthering the common good, and caring for the well-being of others. Thank you.

MN Conference of the United Methodist Church: Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches



What we're asking: **When your county surpasses a 5 percent positivity rate (check your county's current rate here), reinstate social distancing, indoor masking, and no congregational singing.**

Specifically and additionally, we recommend the following:

Worship and life events:

- You may hold in-person worship of up to whatever number of people your space can accommodate with at least six feet between each family unit. Have a contingency plan for overflows beyond the approved number of people. Thoroughly clean surfaces and common areas between services.
- Groups can worship outdoors if social distancing is maintained between family units. Masks should be worn if there are more than 500 people.
- Continue holding online worship (even if you also do in-person), recording from home or the sanctuary with participation from small groups of people.
- Have people spread out in the sanctuary. Allow only one family unit per pew with measured markers indicating proper physical distance in approved and marked seating areas. Explore meeting in a fellowship hall or outdoors if your space is small.
- At children's time, children should not come forward. Instead, create from you-to-the-pew story moments engaging children from safe distancing.
- Life ritual services can be offered in more traditional ways—but funerals, weddings, and graduation and confirmation celebrations should pay careful attention to limiting guests and keeping proper physical distance.
- High-risk individuals (those over age 60 and/or with underlying health conditions), particularly those who are not vaccinated, are encouraged to stay home and should be given options to participate in the life of the church through virtual means.

Recommendations for those leading and attending worship during this phase:

- Require people to face masks while at church, per CDC guidelines.
- Have people spread out in the sanctuary space. Allow only one family unit per pew with measured markers indicating proper physical distance in approved and marked seating areas. Explore meeting in a fellowship hall or outdoors if your space is small.
- Use no-touch alternatives for greetings and passing the peace. Consider a friendly wave, a slight bow of the head, or crossing your arms over your heart.
- Collect offering without person-to-person contact. Consider having one or more baskets around the sanctuary that people could simply place their offering into during worship or on the way out.
- Minimize the number of items that need to be touched or distributed. Consider using screens or bulletins (one-time use only) rather than Bibles, hymnals, or other worship books to avoid having multiple people touch surfaces that could carry the virus.
- Have designated individual(s) record the names of each person present, not only for attendance purposes but also should it be needed for contact tracing later on.
- Use no-touch alternatives to communion, if you choose to offer it during this phase. For example, have each person pick up a set of pre-packaged elements as they enter and remain socially distanced as they take communion in their seats, or have a masked and gloved steward place individual cups and bread in people's hands as they exit the sanctuary at the end of the service. The safe alternatives for communion might mean some congregations will choose to further postpone offering in-person communion.

- Modify baptisms so they include no skin-to-skin contact. Consider having parents hold babies and small children as the pastor performs the rite.
- Do not sing when gathered inside of your building, given that singing is considered a riskier practice when it comes to spreading aerosols that carry the virus, and cloth masks and physical distancing are unlikely to be adequate protection. Instead, think about playing pre-recorded music and asking those gathered simply to listen or to hum along. (Singing during outdoor worship is considered much safer because the aerosols dissipate much more quickly.)
- A small number of music leaders who are singing do not need to be masked while performing, but they must be adequately spaced out. Instrumentalists (if not a wind instrument) should be masked. No choirs should perform.
- Create opportunities for fellowship time online instead of before or after worship. For everyone's safety, encourage people to leave the building as soon as worship concludes rather than mingling.
- Consider eliminating or limiting volunteer-based nursery care when you first begin in-person gatherings given that social distancing guidelines likely couldn't be followed in a nursery with young children.
- At the end of service, direct people row by row to leave the building to maintain physical distancing. The pastor should not stand at a door to greet people. If possible, have people come in through one entrance and exit through a different entrance, one family unit at a time—and think about propping open the entry and exit doors to eliminate the need for people to touch door handles.

Small groups and faith formation:

- You may offer both in-person and online opportunities for Bible studies and small groups, as well as perhaps for leadership and ministry team meetings. Try to maintain online options you established during earlier phases for at-risk populations and those who do not yet feel comfortable attending in-person.
- You may consider offering children's ministries such as Vacation Bible School (VBS) if you are able to offer it primarily outdoors and have safety protocols in place; we recommend daily temperature checks, keeping kids in the same small groups each day, and requiring masks to be worn at all times.
- Do not offer in-person mission trips or lock-ins until we reach the next phase. While the risk to children and youth has been recorded as somewhat lower than other age groups, children can be asymptomatic carriers who transmit the virus to others.

Staff and building operations:

- Church staff should work from home as much as possible. If multiple staff are in the office at the same time, they should maintain physical distancing, wear masks and follow safety and sanitizing protocols.
- Consider church liability and guidelines recommended by your insurer.

Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.

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The Blooming Grove Visitor

Since 1936

Blooming Grove United Methodist Church

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Run for the Loaves and More

September 11th is the date for this years run/walk for the food shelves. This year we are also hosting a parish wide rib barbeque cook off. Teams from Waterville, Janesville and Blooming Grove will be barbequing ribs and spectators will have the opportunity to taste the results and vote with their wallets.

The team who receives the highest amount of donations will be declared the best barbeque team in the parish, a high honor indeed. All donations will be donated to the Steele/Waseca food shelves.

As always, we encourage you to attend the run/walk. Enjoy the walk or run around the section and feel great about supporting the area food shelves. Registration forms are enclosed in this month's visitor, or call Brad Saufferer (507-363-6579) for a form or to answer any questions. This will also be a great time to come and see the new addition.

We look forward to seeing you there.



More about the BBQ Cook-Off

Food will be ready at noon!

Come for the BBQ Taste—Testing plus a lunch of brats, fries, baked sweets, water. Picnic table seating is available. Feel free to bring your own lawn chairs to relax and enjoy in comfort.