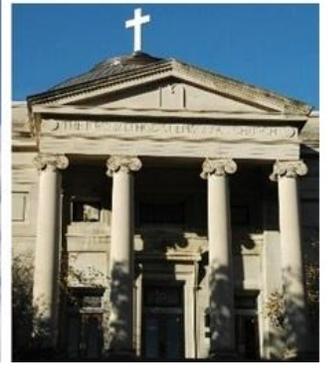




first CHURCH



the
LIGHT
newsletter



May 2021

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Page1

Worship Sundays at 10:30 AM Mabaan at 12:30 PM

“Thus Far the Lord has Helped Us”

In 1st Samuel 7:12, Samuel the prophet and spiritual leader of Israel states: “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” He declared this after the people of Israel abandoned their false gods and returned to worship the one true God.



According to the scripture’s narrative, the people of Israel gathered to worship God at *Mizpah* which means “watchtower” or “lookout.” Throughout the millennia, watchtowers have been a common sight in the hills and fields of Israel. They perform an essential function of guarding vulnerable towns and properties. When standing atop these lookouts, one can gain a totally different perspective by allowing persons to see beyond their immediate surroundings.

We read in the Bible that Mizpah was the scene of a great victory over Israel’s enemies and it was near there that Samuel erected the Ebenezer stone to remind the people of God’s help (verse 12).

During this past year we have been fighting a battle against Covid-19 but the battle is not yet won. By God’s grace, we now have the opportunity to return to in-person worship in our beautiful sanctuary. I believe that God calls us to have gratitude for all of our blessings and care during this pandemic, but we are still fighting this virus and are called to take care of ourselves and others by following the established protocols. Despite this ongoing fight, new signs of hope are real and present for our world today. During this time of pandemic, God has comforted those who have suffered from Covid 19 and Jesus has been present with those who have lost a beloved one. This is why we can declare with increased faith and conviction, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” God was present with doctors and nurses who cared for the sick. God was present with scientists and doctors who developed a vaccine to defeat the virus and through the work of many, everyone now has the opportunity to receive this lifesaving vaccine.

“Thus far the Lord has helped us.” We have seen God’s presence in our faith community as members virtually attended worship, prayer times, meetings and other gatherings showing their continuing love of God, the church, and the community.

continued

"Thus far the Lord has helped us". Over the last year the staff showed love for our church by adapting to the many changes that were needed to carry on the ministry of the church.

"Thus far the Lord has helped us." We have witnessed our faith community's continued offerings to God and ongoing participation in our church ministry and community service.

"Thus far the Lord has helped us." We have had the opportunity to reach out to our community in new ways through the use of technology and social media. God has helped us learn new ways of doing ministry that will be vital as the Church moves into this new and different time.

I am sure that you also can add many things to this list. Go to the church's Facebook page or send us a letter or email and share with us your thoughts. Share your reflection of gratitude; "Thus far the Lord has helped us" by _____. We would love to hear how you think God has helped you, your church, your community and our world.

Pastor Edgar

Systemic Racism



FUMC
Anti-racism
Task Force

One of the most difficult things we face as we try to confront and end racism, as individuals and as a community of faith is the fact that it's so deeply embedded in our systems that we often don't recognize it. Because it's built into the very foundation of American society, systemic racism occurs in some of our most fundamental structures. That includes [where you live](#), what kind of [education you're able to receive](#), how your family [has \(or hasn't\) acquired wealth](#), what [quality of healthcare](#) you can easily access, how likely it is for you to [face violent and deadly policing](#), your [access to voting](#), and more.

One example has to do with housing. A CBS news report in February stated that from 1930 – 1960 there was a remarkable record of exclusion guaranteeing that mortgages were only granted to white people. By 1950 98% of all federal loans had been given to whites. Areas where Blacks lived were marked, and no loans were given there. The Federal Government, with its racist policies, known as "redlining" had a big role in enforcing discrimination. This was the beginning of the racial wealth gap, which was compounded over generations.

In Iowa the results of redlining are just now being recognized, as the legislature is considering a bill designed to help residents in areas that were redlined address the consequences of those policies. It would waive some property taxes in those neighborhoods so that homeowners would be better able to make improvements needed due to deterioration over the years. "Housing advocates say the legislation ...is the first in Iowa, and possibly in the nation, to directly link historically racist policies with their enduring effects, including Black wealth and homeownership gaps." (DM Register, March 23, 2021)

continued

Indeed, the results of redlining went even further. According to Glenn Harris, President of Race Forward, areas that were redlined didn't then have the tax base to support quality public schools, health care systems or transportation, leading to issues of public safety and often over-policing.

In a similar way, Blacks and other minorities such as Eastern Europeans, Jews, Asians and Italians have found it more difficult to start small businesses. According to a 2017 study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, banks were twice as likely to provide business loans to white applicants as to Blacks or other entrepreneurs of color, making it much more difficult for them to start businesses or get them off the ground.

Here in Des Moines we know that the construction of I-235 in the downtown area displaced a whole community of thriving Black businesses and homes, and it was very difficult for them to relocate and begin again.

Another example of a policy that contributed to growing the wealth gap is Social Security. Hailed in 1935 as a safety net, it largely left out Black citizens, since it excluded domestic and agricultural workers, and others in menial, low-wage, "off-the-books" jobs without payroll information. Inequities built in so long ago continue to have an impact today. Take a look at health care, for example. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the disproportionately high rate of COVID-19 deaths among Black people in the U.S. is not merely a happenstance. Instead, this racial disparity is the result of a host of structural conditions that (ultimately) had their roots in slavery, as Dr. Sabrina Strings, an associate professor of sociology at the University of California, Irvine, argued in the *New York Times*. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, has also backed up a similar claim, noting that social determinants of health for Black Americans are contributing to the disparity seen in the pandemic.

These are just a few examples. Systemic racism impacts nearly every aspect of our lives, and it's critical that we begin to see it, name it and erase it.

Sources: [The New Jim Crow](#), by Michelle Alexander, Wikipedia, the Des Moines Register

Congratulations

We are excited that on April 7th, Laura Meza received her US citizenship! Now she and Pastor Edgar are both US citizens!





Sanitizing the Sanctuary

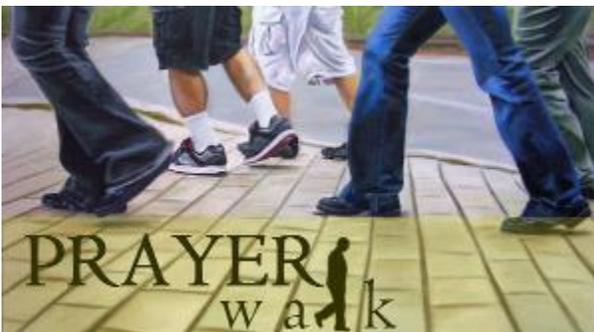
Thanks to John Sarosi who has been sanitizing the sanctuary between the First Church service and the Mabaan service. We want everyone to be safe. Pews are being sprayed with a disinfectant that kills various viruses including Covid-19.

This procedure will also be used during the flu season.



“We can’t find God’s dream for us until we allow ourselves to think beyond the possible.”

Lisa Sharon Harper



Each week during our 12 week prayer journey, the Sunday morning messages have been about various types of prayer (adoration, intercession, blessing etc.). On Sunday, May 2nd the congregation will be hearing about prayer walks. You will have to come to worship that day to get the details but we would like for you to mark your calendars for Saturday, May 15th at 9:00 AM for a prayer walk through downtown. It will last approximately one hour. We will divide into groups of 2

or 3 who can then each choose their own route. If you aren’t able to walk, we invite you to meet us at the church and you can drive and pray. If you are no longer driving, look out your window and observe what is happening in your neighborhood. What can we as church do to respond to the needs of our community? A Prayer Walk might just help us form a response to those needs.

Be sure to wear comfortable shoes. We will provide water and snacks.
See you on the 15th!



CHURCH ON A MISSION

First Church is on a mission to transform the world into a more just and loving place. How do we do that? We do that by offering our time, our talents, our gifts, our service and our witness to our local community and the world.

Each year the Outreach Committee makes available to members and others opportunities to be difference makers. Over the next several months, the Light will feature a series of articles entitled "Church on a Mission." We will share with you more about the ways First Church is making a difference in our community and the world.

The Bridge

Since 2004, First Church has been a member of The Bridge, a cooperative effort of four downtown churches (St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. John's Lutheran Church and First United Methodist Church). The Bridge has formed an ecumenical eatery called The Connection Café. The Café serves lunch five days a week to homeless and low income individuals and families in downtown Des Moines. Under the direction of a paid coordinator, volunteers from more than 50 churches, schools and civic groups donate and serve an average of 105 meals every weekday. First Church has three people who sit on the Bridge Board: Julia Berg, Ned Johnson and Christine Anders. During the pandemic, individual donations for food have been given. Each year the Outreach Committee provides \$1,600 to support this vital ministry.

"When I was hungry you gave me food...When I was thirsty you gave me drink...I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

We will celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday on May 30 and the entire month of May.

When you give on Peace with Justice Sunday, your gift makes possible our critical kingdom work in the world. Because you give:

- Methodists spearhead a peace ministry uniting Arizona border communities
- United Methodists in Liberia are being equipped to implement the denomination's Social Principles to address social-justice issues
- Pennsylvania students are educating their community about sex-trafficking at home and abroad



These initiatives, and hundreds of other ones, are possible because you give.



Thank you for your Easter Offerings!

This year our Easter Offering was divided between DMARC food pantry and salary support for our missionary, Chin Cho.



The pandemic has caused many people a great deal of hardship and the need for food has greatly increased. Between March and June of last year due to high unemployment, 4,687 people used the food pantry for the first time and the need continues.

Each year First Church has committed to pay \$1,700 toward the salary support of a United Methodist missionary. As you know, we support Chin Cho. His work with the people of Mongolia is important and we are blessed to be able to be a part of it.



Thanks for your generosity. At this printing we have raised **\$2,539.70**



Donations to help toddler **Malcom** are \$1082!
Thank you for being generous.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT METHODIST HOSPITAL



Looking for a way to get more involved in your community? Do you need volunteer hours, but want to achieve them in a meaningful way? Join us at UnityPoint Health Des Moines as a Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) or Patient and Family Support Team (PFST) Volunteer!

Our HELP volunteers work directly with older adult patients to prevent delirium and physical decline in the hospital. HELP volunteers provide daily visits, feeding assistance, and bedside exercises to our patients. Our PFST volunteers work with adult patients of all ages to promote connections with loved ones. This is done by providing video calls with friends and family who cannot visit the hospital, as well as other general support needs for the patient. If you are interested in either opportunity, please email Lauren McDowell at Lauren.Mcdowell@unitypoint.org.



My favorite song to play on the bells is "Hymn of Promise". We have played it a few times and every time that we play it the song is stuck in my head all week long until we practice it again the following Thursday.

This time when coming up with a topic for this article I tried to find something important to say, and the "Hymn of Promise" was always playing in my mind while trying to think. So I guess someone was trying to speak to me.

I started to research it by finding the full lyrics to the song. If you haven't done this before I recommend that you take a few moments and find the hymn and listen to the music and read the lyrics. I mean I know it is called the hymn of promise and I know the tune but I was shocked to find it spot on for the current state of the world. It's what we have all been doing for the last year, waiting for the right time to come out of our homes and join in the beauty of the world again. There is a time and a season that everything must bloom and that season is in the hands of God. He will make the time right for us all again.

The last line of each verse is "Unrevealed until it's season, something God alone can see". Seems to me there is an end in sight but it is not for me to figure out and force this pandemic to be over, but maybe wait until God is ready to show it to us.

Stay safe everyone and let's enjoy each other's faces again when it is safe to do so. Until then just know I'm smiling at each and every one of you (under the cover of my mask, of course)

Submitted by Ellie Mindrup, Music Ministry Member



Scholarships

Dorothy Strayer Memorial Scholarship

Again this year First United Methodist Church is offering college scholarships for the 2021-22 school year. Please contact Ned Johnson at 515-771-8875 for information and application forms. The application deadline is September 15.



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**DEADLINE FOR FUTURE LIGHT
ISSUES IS THE 20TH OF EACH
MONTH**



Want to serve but wondering how to do it in the middle of a pandemic? Do you have a lot on your plate, and want a super simple way to make a difference?

Like us on Facebook!

Interact with our posts from the comfort of your home - you can even wear your favorite jammies or sweatpants! With a simple click or tap, you can help like, share, and follow First Church's content, helping to boost our online visibility and grow our church.

And for extra credit, if you have any content you would like us to share, please let us know!

