

From Pastor's Desk: "New Spiritual Resolution"

- Personal Spiritual Resolution



The new year is just around the corner. When you receive this newsletter and read this article, I believe we are already in 2023. Many people are excited to have new year and celebrate it in a special way. While watching how people celebrate New Year's on TV, they seem to believe that this new year will give them a new life. However, as you already know, a new year does not have any magical power to transform our lives. In fact, there is no big difference between 12/31/2022 and 1/1/2023. It is a mere change of date as we experience every day. However, despite this somewhat cold and objective understanding about new year, I still believe that it is special. This is because it gives us an opportunity to look back on our lives in the past and dream about the better life in the future. Some people might look down on having some new year's resolution due to its ineffectiveness. However, I still think that it is valuable to have new year's resolution whether you fail or succeed because of people's power of imagination for the better future.

When you dream about a better life in 2023, what kind of new resolutions come to your mind? Read more books? Drink less alcohol? Quit smoking? Eat veggies regularly? Plan a great vacation? Send more cards? Lose some weight? Whatever they are, I think they will be beneficial for the better life. However, these new resolutions tend to focus on our body and mind. Somehow, I find that people in this world do not take care of their spirit. Even believers who are thinking spirit is critical for the better life do not pay attention to spirit. In this materialistic world, I strongly encourage our church members to think about, at least, one spiritual resolution for 2022.

People seem to believe that healthy spirituality or a deeper relationship with God is freely and naturally given by God or could be easily attained by little religious activities. However, it is a big misunderstanding about spirituality or a relationship with God. It takes a lot of effort and time. For a deeper relationship with God, people need to train themselves like an athlete drives them into a harsh training to win a game. As many spiritual ancestors said, God's grace is free, but it is not cheap. There are several ways to deepen your relationship with God. We call them spiritual practices, spiritual habits, or spiritual discipline. John Wesley called them "means of grace." Whatever term you would like to use, they indicate the same thing. There are tangible and practical ways to deepen our relationship with God.

Among countless ways, I would like to recommend the basic, yet fundamental spiritual practices: they are worship, prayer, the Bible, mission, and giving. Throughout January, I strongly encourage you think and plan about how to install these spiritual practices into your daily lives as a new spiritual resolution. Certainly, you do not have to try all these five practices at once. Rather, it would be better to try one at a time. For helping the church members to think about their spiritual resolution, I plan to have some special worship and ritual during January.

On January 1st, New Year, we will have a time to think about spiritual resolution through the worship service. On January 8th, we will reflect the meaning of our baptism while commemorating Jesus' baptism. Then, we will have the time to reaffirm our baptism through a simple ritual during the service. The church leaders will have an opportunity to dedicate themselves to God once again through a ritual, "Church Leader Installation" on the third Sunday of January.



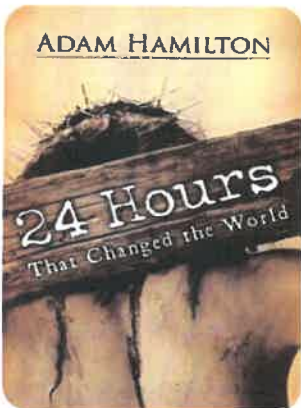
- Communal Spiritual Resolution

This spiritual resolution is not only for an individual church member, but also for our believing community, Covenant UMC. Throughout January, I will invite the church members collectively to think about the future and vision of the church. From the middle of January till Lent, sermon will focus on “church” based on 1 Corinthians chapter 1 through 3, which will help the church members to think what church is and how we build up God’s church together. Our church preachers, Denise and Mary, had participated and completed ICD (The Institute for Congregational Development) program that is one-year program, focusing on church planting and revitalization. Through this program, they got great ideas and insight about the future of the church. They will share their learnings from this program and invite the church members to think about the direction of the church through two Sunday Worship services: January 29th and February 19th.

In addition, there will be the church planning meeting on January 19th (Thursday) at 9:00 AM. All church leaders who belong to the church council MUST attend and any church members who are interested in church planning are encouraged to join. In this meeting, we will discuss the church vision and direction and plan out 2023 year-long church plan. This meeting will last at least 5 to 6 hours. Please pray that God will guide this meeting so that we can find God’s will for the church and build up an effective plan for fulfilling them. Furthermore, pray for the church leaders who need to endure this lengthy meeting.

Lenten Bible Study Survey

Whether you believe or not, the Lenten season is coming. In 2023, the beginning of Lent, which is Ash Wednesday, is February 22nd. As you already know, Lent is the one of the best seasons to renew our relationship with God through reflection and meditation on Jesus. Thus, I usually have a Lenten Bible Study during this season. This year, the Lenten sermon theme that I chose is Jesus’ last 24 hours based on the book,



“24 Hours That Changed the World” by Adam Hamilton. Based on this book and sermon series, I am going to lead one or two 6-week Lenten Bible Studies, which will begin in the beginning of February and end in the end of March. Since this is my first Bible Study in the church, I am going to take a survey to understand which day and time would be the best for the church members to participate. If you look at the table in the Narthex area, you can find a survey form. What I need from you is very simple. Write down your name in all good days and times on this one-page survey form. There will be five days and times: Tuesday morning at 9:30, Thursday morning at 9:30, Wednesday evening at 5:30, 6:00, or 6:30. It is totally okay to write down your name in all five places if you are available on all these days and times. If I find more than four people in a certain day and time, I plan to form a group.

I would like to consider three things regarding this Lenten Bible Study. First, this study group is not like a catechism class where you are forced to listen to lectures and memorized Bible verses. This class is more focused on conversations and sharing. Based on the content of the book and video that we watch together during the class, we will reflect on our own lives and share them with each other. Secondly, you do not need any knowledge about the Bible at all. What you need for this class is your curiosity about Jesus or passion for a relationship with Him. You do not even have to read the textbook if you are not a reader. The 10-minute video that we are watching together in class will cover the content of the book very well. Lastly, if you are a member of the Wednesday morning Bible Study group, you do not have to join the group. The Wednesday morning Bible Study group will read the same book that is the textbook for the Lenten Bible Study from January. If you would like to join both, it is totally okay though. I believe small group gathering is the best way to learn and reflect on Jesus, even more than listening to sermon because of its two-way conversation. Come and join! It would be not only spiritual and educational, but also fun and joyful.

Sermon Survey Result and Plan



For planning the future sermon series, our church has taken a sermon survey over the course of four weeks. 22 church members participated in this somewhat long survey. Thank you for all your active participation. The survey shows me that the most interesting Lent sermon themes are *“Spiritual Practices”* and *“The Parables of Jesus.”* Also, many church members wanted to learn about *“the book of John”* during Lent. I will not reflect this result for the 2023 Lent season because I already chose the sermon theme, *“Jesus’ last 24 hours.”* However, I will prepare these chosen sermon series for 2024 and 2025 Lent. Throughout the survey, I realized how much our church members are interested in learning various spiritual practices including fundamental ones such as prayer, reading the Bible, and worship service. Furthermore, I personally believe that spiritual practices are essential parts for deepening a relationship with God. Thus, instead of having this theme for Lent, I plan to preach this theme once a year.

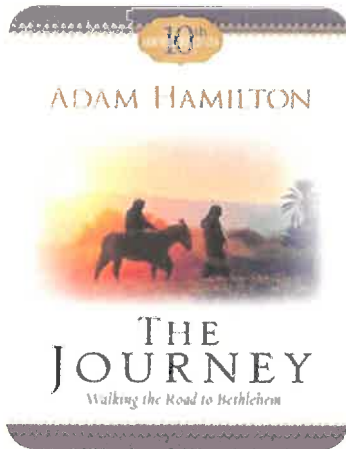
The most wanted Advent sermon theme is *“Faithful”*: looking at the Christmas story from the perspective of Joseph, the father of Jesus. This will be 2023 Advent sermon theme. From the Old Testament (more correctly saying the *“Hebrew Bible”*), our church members picked three figures they would like to learn about: *Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph*. I begin purchasing books and commentaries about them to deepen my understanding. I will preach them once a year throughout 2023 to 2025. The best themes from the New Testament are *“7 Miraculous Signs”* in the Book of John and *“Apostle Paul.”* I am thinking about preaching these two themes with other preachers in the church (Mary and Denise) as a team-preaching. In this survey, I had a category for *“various sermon themes.”* In this category, more than 50 % of the participants chose the theme, *“Forgiveness”* out of more than 10 themes. The second theme is the *“Holy Spirit.”* These themes will be presented as sermon series in the near future.

The most interesting category for me while reading surveys is the section about writing their own spiritual and life questions. Honestly, I did not expect a lot of answers from the church members based on my previous experience. However, almost all church members who participated in this survey shared their own life and spiritual questions. I am thankful for the church members who took this survey seriously. I found these questions are interesting and thought-provoking. Some of them are serious and theological, asking about heaven, death, second coming of Jesus, unanswered prayer, other religions, understanding of the homosexuality and so on. Others are life-related ones, such as health issue, family living, forgiveness, giving decisions and so on. The followings are some questions that the church members shared with me:

- *“Does your spirit go to heaven when your physical dies?”*
- *“What about hell? Would a loving father really condemn billions of people to eternal torments?”*
- *“How do I deal with doubts?”*
- *“How to let go of my control issues and follow God instead?”*
- *“Moving forward: Letting go of the past”*
- *“What does it mean to really depend on or trust God?”*
- *“Why does God sometimes seem absent or far away, especially when I need Him the most?”*
- *“Homosexuality from biblical perspective from both sides – for and against”*
- *“To love others even when they are impossible to love”*

I plan to prepare a few sermon series to answer these questions during 2024 – 2025.

Once again, I appreciate all your active participation in this survey. I probably have this kind of sermon survey at least every two years. Other than the sermon survey, your honest sharing about your life and spiritual difficulties and questions are very beneficial to make my sermons more relevant and effective. Feel free to share with me your life and spiritual questions whenever you have a chance. Please remember that all sermons are for deepening your relationship with God. The quality of sermon and fulfillment of the sermon purpose do not only depend on pastor’s preparation but also depend on the church members’ active responses.



Confirmation News

Confirmation class will resume on January 8th (Sunday) at 6:30 PM. All confirmands, please mark your calendar and make sure to join the class on that day. We will continue to have the Advent Bible study, reading "The Journey", chapter 4. Also, this program requires all confirmands to have several meetings with their mentors and parents during the program. If you are confirmand, mentor, or parent who haven't had any meeting yet, please get together at least once during January. In this meeting, you can talk about the following themes: getting to know each other, personal spiritual journey, sermon, mission, learnings from Confirmation class, and any theological and spiritual talk. If you need any help for this meeting, please do not hesitate to contact me. (617-894-3545 or leeho0531@gmail.com) Furthermore, there will be a mid-evaluation meeting on Feb 5th (Sunday) at 6:30 PM. All confirmands, mentors, and parents are required to join this meeting. In this meeting, we will check where the confirmation process is and talk about the future plan. Please mark your calendar and join this meeting. I am looking forward to seeing all of you soon.

2023 Covenant UMC Directory

Thanks to our beloved Administrative Assistant Kelly's dedicated work, we published a 2023 church directory. The main reason for publishing this directory is to create the basic resource to deepen a relationship among church members as the Body of Christ. Please pick this directory from a table in the narthex and use it to connect with other church members including me, Pastor. If you find any wrong information, do not be panicked. It happens whenever publishing directory in any churches. Just let the church office know what corrections are needed; we will keep updating it throughout the year and publish it every year.

What Kind of Church Do We Want To Be?

Go out of the church walls. Meet people where they are. Build relationships. Be engaged in the community. Be outwardly focused. These statements were just one of the themes we heard when participating in Institute of Congregational Development (ICD). For the last ten months, Mary Balson and Denise Retzleff gained new insight into church planting and growth as we attended seminars, read books, and completed assignments.

A second theme was discipleship. If you are a church member does this equate to being a disciple? If you were to define what a disciple is, would there be agreement from within the congregation? What process does your church have in place to intentionally help people become a mature disciple? We will explore this theme on Sunday, January 29 when Mary and Denise will share a message on discipleship.

A third area of focus for ICD was discerning God's vision of the congregation. We need to be risk takers and forward thinkers who dream God sized dreams. Try new things. Don't get too comfortable. Learn from experiences that don't go exactly as planned. Focus more on the big picture and less on fixing little things.

And finally, the theme of laity empowerment was emphasized. Laity are the people who are not pastors. Each of us has a stake in the church. You can identify the spiritual gifts God has given you as you do the work of the church. Laity should be so engaged that even when a pastor leaves (as regularly happens in the UMC) that the life, work, mission and vision of the congregation carries on. The pastor may light the Torch, but the laity carry it out. We will dig deeper into this theme at our Feb. 19 worship service.



Date	Scripture and Sermon	Volunteers	Mission	Music/ Special Event
January 1 Communion	Matthew 25:31-46 or Revelation 21:1-6	Liturgist: Media: Live: Usher: Bill K, Dave G, Bill O Communion: Donna M	Pacto de Gracia	New Year's Day
January 8 Epiphany Baptism of the Lord	Matthew 3:13-17	Liturgist: Media: Live: Usher: Bill K, Dave G, Bill O	Pacto de Gracia	Choir Reaffirmation of Baptism
January 15 SPECIAL SERVICE: Martin Luther King, Jr service at St. Paul's Cathedral at 2:00pm	1 Corinthians 1:1-9	Liturgist: Children's: Media: Live: Usher: Bill K, Dave G, Bill O	Pacto de Gracia	Bell Choir Installation of New Leaders
January 22	1 Corinthians 1:10-18	Liturgist: Children's: Media: Live: Usher: Bill K, Dave G, Bill O	Pacto de Gracia	Choir
January 29	"Discipleship"	Liturgist: Children's: Media: Live: Usher: Bill K, Dave G, Bill O	Pacto de Gracia	Mary B and Denise R share ICD learning

Church Conference Meeting

We had 20 people attend our 2022 Charge Conference. Pastor Park Hunter, our new DS facilitated the conference. We learned a little about Pastor Park and how he came to be a Methodist. He was very impressed with our mission work and all of the positive comments that were shared regarding our life here at



Covenant. Motions made and carried included the following: leadership roles and committee members; Pastor's compensation package; Denise Retzleff as our lay leader/speaker; and the budget. Park then took time to answer any questions we had and there was much discussion with the current UMC stand on LGBTQ+ rights in our churches.

Gifts for Families



I am absolutely blown away by your generosity. Your food, gifts, and donations of money purchased 110 gifts, eight laundry baskets filled with cleaning supplies, eight gift cards to Aldi and about 50 grocery bags of food. The smiles of joy, the hugs, the surprised looks at all of the food, gifts, and cleaning supplies made Shelli and me so happy. One mom said they were the only gifts they would have this Christmas. Another mom had a car seat she no longer needed and asked if she could donate it to the church. We took it for Pacto to use. It meant a lot for her to be able to give something back to us. Chairing this project for the past few years has brought me so much joy – thank you. -Diane Weider



Cookie Walk

What can I say except that it was a HUGE SUCCESS. Baking, bringing, displaying and selling over \$1800 of cookies is no small accomplishment. But, our dedicated group of workers did it! During our sale I saw many unfamiliar faces so it was attended by a lot of community members. Thank you to everyone who baked, brought or bought cookies, and worked the sale. Plus, we have enough cookies in the freezer for Loaves and Fishes in January.

-Sending Forth and Sara Circle



24 Hours that Changed the World

Would you like to better understand the events that occurred during the last 24 hours of Jesus' life, to see more clearly the theological significance of Christ's suffering and death, and to reflect upon the meaning of these events for your own life? To do this we will look at the geographical and historical setting of the events of that fateful day; reflect on Jesus' death; and ultimately, look to see ourselves in the story, considering how we are like Pilate or Peter, Judas or John.

Are you curious? Join this Bible study and conversation on Wednesday mornings in the choir room, starting at 9:30 am and concluding in one hour. This new series starts January 4, 2023. There is no registration, no fee, and no work between sessions. Come as you are, eager to ask questions, learn and discuss. For more information contact Denise Retzleff at 920- 539-0336. We will use bestselling author Adam Hamilton's video series as we experience '24 Hours that Changed the World.'

United Methodist Men

Your United Methodist Men (UMM) met on Saturday, December 10 at Rolling Meadows with 6 men present. We discussed the jam sale and we sold all so thank you! Since the last meeting, we got a great deal on Cheerios at Pick N Save (10 for \$10) so we took all they had and delivered 107 boxes to the schools. We also delivered 144 pair of waterproof winter gloves and 66 packages of socks, underwear, leggings, sweats, and more. We were able to do this because of the generosity of the church. Plus, we continue to do weekly bananas for the kids as well. The church is making a difference for our kids. Thank you all.

"The darkness I can't change is side by side with the light of the Savior who changes everything." Mattie Jackson Selecman

-Darrell Jewson, UMM Chair

Covenant Cares About People (CCAP)

In October, the Endowment Committee allowed \$500 a month to be used for the kids. Each Monday morning, we buy 8 boxes of bananas. This month, I also bought 52 boxes of Cheerios and delivered them. I have been told by staff at the schools how much and how far this goes. Thank you, Covenant! Any donations can be sent to the church with a note in the memo line CCAP.

-Darrell Jewson, Chair

Loaves and Fishes

Our next serving date is January 18. The format has changed so it will be carryout– not curbside. We will all stay warmer! Sign up with be January 8th and 15th.

Trustees

With the start of a new year, 2023, your Trustee's are committed to completing projects slated for this year and for future important projects regarding the upkeep of Covenant. We hope that our church members and our Church Council will continue to be supportive of our efforts for the well-being of Covenant. We must keep in mind the need to improve the external appearance of our church as well as the interior. In 2022, the Church Council authorized the painting of the North end of the educational building which was discolored and had mold. The color chosen was called Vanillin which received good comments and has given our members a chance to see what the rest of the exterior would look like when it is repainted. The repair to the educational window damage, driveway and parking lot repavement are on the agenda for consideration. I would like to welcome 2 new committee members, Bill Dekker and Mona Averbeck to our committee. May God bless and guide this committee with its ongoing work for Covenant. Bill Averbeck, Chair

Family Ministries

It was a pleasure working with our Family Ministries team, our kids and the parents of our Sunday School kids this past year. We were able to bring our congregation a beautiful Christmas program which was arranged by Pastor Ho Lee. Our kids did a terrific job. Thanks to all who were involved in any way. We also had a roller skating party for the kids and youth at Kornell's. Everyone had a great



time. We look forward to more activities for our kids in the coming months. In January we will be working on our curriculum lessons and VBS preparations with Salem, NFDL Community and Pacto de Gracia. **Confirmation, Youth, and Sunday school will resume on January 8.** May you all have a blessed and great new year in 2023.



Youth Lock-In

Five boys joined Pastor Ho Lee, Judi Balson, and me for the first lock-in. After skating, we returned to church to scarf down pizza, soda, and junk food. The boys then invaded the third floor youth room to wrestle, play virtual games, and stackable tetra tower. Judi brought cut-outs and frostings and the boys enjoyed decorating cookies for fellowship hour on Sunday morning. Pastor then taught them some Korean games and they got a little wild with the punishments for losing. This will happen with brothers and cousins. They then burnt off steam playing tag around the church. They



eventually crashed around 1:30. Judi got up the next morning and made them pancakes. I went home at 10:00, having been sick, and really appreciate Judi and Pastor staying with them overnight.

-Submitted by Diane Weider



January 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1 9:00am Service 10:15am Sunday School 10:15am Youth Group 10:15am Choir practice 6:30pm Confirmation</p>	<p>2 9:00am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice</p>	<p>3 6:30pm Trustees</p>	<p>4 9:30am Bible Study 10:45am Sara Circle</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 8:00am Men's Breakfast @ Rolling Meadows</p>
<p>8 9:00am Service 10:15am Sunday School 10:15am Youth Group 10:15am Choir practice 6:30pm Confirmation</p>	<p>9 9:00am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice</p>	<p>10 6:30pm Pacto de Gracia Shepherding Meeting</p>	<p>11 9:00am Copier Installation 9:30am Bible Study</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 8:00am Men's Breakfast @ Rolling Meadows</p>
<p>15 9:00am Service 10:15am Sunday School 10:15am Youth Group 10:15am Choir practice 2:00pm Ecumenical Service for MLK, Jr 6:30pm Confirmation</p>	<p>16 9:00am Staff Meeting 10:15am Worship Committee 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice</p>	<p>17 10:30am Friends of Chegwin 4:00pm Finance Meeting</p>	<p>18 9:30am Bible Study 5:00pm Champions BINGO</p>	<p>19 9:00am Leader Planning Meeting</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22 9:00am Service 10:15am Sunday School 10:15am Youth Group 10:15am Choir practice 6:30pm Confirmation</p>	<p>23 9:00am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice 6:30pm Church Council</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 8:00am Women's Breakfast @ Rolling Meadows 9:30am Bible Study</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29 9:00am Service 10:15am Sunday School 10:15am Youth Group 10:15am Choir practice 6:30pm Confirmation</p>	<p>30 9:00am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice</p>	<p>31</p>				

Staff Appreciation

The staff of Covenant would like to share their deep appreciation to everyone for their generous Christmas gifts. We are blessed to work in a community with all of you and are excited for the year ahead! Thank you!

Kelly, Judi, David and Ho Lee

Birthdays

- 1-3 Casey Averbeck
- 1-10 Betty Beardsley
- 1-13 Nicklas Averbeck
Joyce Kurtz
- 1-18 Kevin Sherman
- 1-19 Cheryl Abitz
- 1-20 Karla Kahlhamer
Marilynn Roessler
- 1-21 Jan Andrews
- 1-22 Jackson Goldapske
- 1-29 Liona Brockway



80+ birthdays!

Betty Beardsley
Joyce Kurtz
Marilynn Roessler
Jan Andrews
Liona Brockway



Anniversaries

Jan 12—William and Shelli Dekker

Jan 23—Doug and Judie Duitman



Covenant United Methodist Church
20 North Marr Street
Fond du Lac, WI 54935

Main Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 9:00AM-12:00PM

Pastor Office Hours:

Monday– Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm

Ways to Give with Tithe.ly

- Tithe.ly app
- Text “give” to 920-267-4801
- Visit our website: covenantforyou.church/give

Pastor: Pastor Ho Lee

Email: Leeho0531@gmail.com cell: 617.894.3545

Pastor of Hispanic Ministry: Rev. Janet Martinez

Administrative Assistant: Kelly Braun

Custodian: Judi Balson

Music Director: David Thompson

**ARK submission deadline is the
20th of each month at noon.
Please get your content to the
office by this date for the next
month’s issue.**

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