

The Word



MAY 2017

St. Thomas United Methodist Church



Greetings to dear family of St. Thomas and extended family,

Did you know? The United Methodist Church celebrates the month of May as Christian Home Month? Christian Home Month is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home and its key role as a center for faith formation. Maybe it is because all the important family holidays are in May. In Korea, on May 5th we celebrate it as Children's Day. Mother's Day is in May throughout the world or some countries celebrate Mother's Day as Parent Day. The theme for 2017 is: "Families Called to Love."

Let's take a look at the Scripture for key verses that ground us in love. Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Here we are reminded to love God and to keep these words throughout the day in visible ways. Through Jesus' words in John 13:34-35, we hear the commandment to love one another. As we are called to show love individually, we are called as disciples to show love in our homes and with those we call family. And as we act with love toward those in our family, we are challenged to act in love with those in our communities and in the world.

I want to encourage all of us to use this month to engage our family and our extended family with a special love in action. Perhaps you can model to read the Bible together once a week or family prayer time or special family night. Be creative! Just some thoughts that you might want to consider, I have included the following:

FAMILY NIGHT. Set aside a regular time for sharing family fun activities together. You could do the same activity each time [play board games, cook special treats, volunteer as a family in service to others (PADS is coming up in May), learn about people who live different lives from yours]. Or each family night could be planned by a different family member, with the activity based on agreed-upon criteria.

LOVING OTHERS. Identify people in your community who are in need of knowing God's love (someone who has just lost a family member, someone struggling in school, someone new to your community, someone who can no longer drive a car, someone who is sick). This month or each month, make cards together to send to those who need to know God's love; or, as a family, visit someone from your church or your community who is alone and needs to know there are those who care about him or her.

One last thing, please pray for your family and all the other families that you know during this month of May. Here is a Prayer you can use: "Gracious God, who created all of humankind and showed to us the importance of relationships with one another, we commend to your care all the families of our church, community, and world. We pray that each home may be a home where love is felt. We pray for homes where hurt, abuse, and suffering abide, instead of love,. We pray for children, youth, and adults, recognizing the importance of and the gift of every age as we grow. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to know where there is no love, courage to act out of love for others, and peace to

trust in your grace. Help us to live so that the commandments of love for you and love for others are shown in the ways we live together." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

May God's Love be with all your family!

--Pastor Jeremiah Lee

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LEADERSHIP TEAM

Planning for Summer

The Leadership Team met on Saturday, 8am on March 22. Devotions considered the question that Jesus asks us---"What do you want me to do for you?" We were challenged to pray specifically, circling our concerns with continual prayer.

Calendar items that we considered and ones that you will want to put on your calendar. We were reminded that we want our activities/events to bring us closer to God and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Leadership Team meetings – Saturday, May 20, 8am, Saturday, June 24, 8am, no meeting in July, Friday evening & Saturday, August 25-26: Team Visioning & Planning; anyone from the congregation is welcome to attend these meetings

Vacation Bible School – Monday – Thursday evenings July 24-27; Olivia Voltaggio will lead this education event for children.

Church Rummage Sale – Preparation - August 6-10; Sale days Friday & Saturday August 11-12: Sally Hatcher has volunteered to organize this and volunteer help will be needed

Church Auction – possible date in October; we need a team to organize and execute; contact Sally Grenzow with your willingness to be a part of this team

The income from the Rummage Sale and the Auction have been figured into our budget so it is very important that we do these activities so please plan to take part and support these events.

World Relief has once again asked to use our facility for six weeks on Fridays. Their

staff will lead the programming, which will include gardening and other activities.

"On The Table" is a Conference idea from Bishop Sally Dyck. On May 16th area residents will gather in small groups to share a meal and discuss the challenges & opportunities we face in our communities and nation. Hopefully our conversations will inspire new ways for us to work together to make our communities stronger, safer and more dynamic. Juanita Brown has volunteered to organize this effort. Please talk to her about your thoughts and possible involvement.

CROP Walk information was shared by Rick Calhoon & Pastor Jeremiah. This year the Walk will start and end at St Thomas UMC. Volunteers are needed to help on Sunday, May 7 after Worship with registration, directions, packing food, etc. Please see another article here in The WORD about this event that endeavors to help hungry people locally and around the world.

Stewardship/Finance reported that we have a minimum amount of money to pay bills. The March letter that was sent to the congregation generated some more giving and for that we are very thankful. The suggestion was made that we send out quarterly or twice a year statements so people are aware of their giving. Another suggestion that could be considered and helpful to people with IRAs that need to execute RMDs is designated giving to nonprofits in order to avoid some taxes. Rick Calhoon has information about this and a financial planner that has helped the church before would be willing to come and talk about it with interested people.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Pastor Jeremiah.

--Sally Grenzow

WORSHIP TEAM

Eastertide

Psalm 100:1-3 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make Lent meaningful with scripture readings and the two Bible studies that considered the book HE CHOSE THE NAILS: WHAT GOD DID TO WIN YOUR HEART by Max Lucado. It was thought provoking to consider how Jesus faced the end of his life with this book. I especially enjoyed the time in Worship when we listened to the journal thoughts of Mary, the mother of Jesus, And then Holy Week was full of good experiences with the Mission Team working at Midwest Mission Distribution Center and the special Worship times on Palm Sunday, Maunday Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

Now we are in the season of Eastertide, with fifty days between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, which occurs on June 4 this year. Our time would be well spent thinking about the love of Jesus for us and how we can share that love with each and every person we encounter, whether it be the grocery clerk, our family members, or our boss at work. Jesus extended his love and care to everyone that he met. May we do the same!

--Sally Grenzow for the Worship Team

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Midwest Mission Distribution Center

This year's mission trip from April 9th through the 12th was fun and productive. Fourteen people, nine of whom are St. Thomas members, made the trek down to Chatham: Nola Altenhoff, Martha Blumer,

Juanita Brown, Bob and Nancy Curran, Fred Foss, Garry Hojnacki, Ann Kenny, Pastor Jeremiah Lee, Nancy and Pastor Leguizamon, Karen Littlefield, Mary Kay Sheldon, and Sue Whitworth. They brought with them many donated items: a treadle sewing machine, three bicycles, two boxes of school supplies, 160 pairs of work gloves, a storage crate and a bag of baby diapers, gowns, sweaters, etc. In addition, they gave \$150 cash and purchased a \$500 memorial brick, both of which had matching funds which brought the total donated to \$1300.

The volunteers worked 210 hours on a variety of jobs. They packed 216 much-needed flood buckets, filling six pallets for shipment and prepped the area for more to be packed by the next group. They varnished twenty-two school desks, filling an entire pallet. They cleaned and prepped ten bicycles destined for rural Ohio. They sorted, repaired, laundered, and packed blankets, sheets, spreads and pillow cases for a hospital in the Dominican Republic; the donated linens that weren't in good enough condition for hospital use were set aside for donation to an animal shelter. They also packed informational materials about MMDC to be distributed at United Methodist annual conferences, and made improvements to the MMDC physical facilities.

After evening devotions, each person was free to find whatever amusement appealed to him or her. There was communal jigsaw puzzle assembling, there were spirited games of dominoes, reading, televised sports, and even internet surfing for those so inclined. The comments made as the volunteer time ended all stressed the satisfaction of accomplishing something that would help others in need. Many volunteers also indicated how great it was to learn new skills and to meet new people. The volunteers' comments will be shared from time to time in later articles, especially as we approach our next Holy Week trip to MMDC in 2018. --Karen Littlefield

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May church calendar.*



The Flower Cross

Thank you to everyone who supported the Flower Cross. We are giving special

recognition to George Graham for putting the cross in the ground again this year and to Steve Weaver, the only brave soul that we know who walked out to the cross and saved us from sinking any deeper into the mud! This has been a challenge over the years and the cross has been assembled in all sorts of weather including snow, rain and beautifully sunny days. The interest and support has become less over the years. Not only was there a lack of interest in viewing the cross up close this year there was also not enough support. We did not have enough money or flowers and no help shopping or cutting flowers. The cross has been an important part of our Easter celebration and we hate to see it fade away. If someone else wants to take it over we would be available to help carry on the tradition but not to be the only ones responsible for being out on Easter Sunday to assemble it. It is not as easy as it looks. It takes a lot of skill and practice to get the flowers the right length and to know by walking into a room if there are enough flowers or not. We have enjoyed doing this over the years but the 2017 Easter cross is the last creation from "Team Valenta."

OUTREACH MINISTRIES *On the Table*

In 2014 the Chicago Community Trust created an annual forum designed to "elevate civic conversation, foster new

relations and inspire collaborative action across the region".

On May 16, 2017 Thomas and I, as part of the Northern Illinois Conference and St. Thomas United Methodist Church, will host a dinner to bring together people of diverse backgrounds, interests and concerns to discuss what we feel is important in making our community stronger. We also will attempt to develop ideas and suggestions that we feel will contribute to us living in a much stronger and ultimately more livable community.

If we are able to develop actionable ideas that the Trust considers workable, On the Table will help us bring our ideas to life through the "Acting Up" award.

The group will consist of 10-12 individuals. If you would like to participate, please let me know. If you have ideas of individuals and /or organization representatives that you think will add to the conversation, please send me their names.

Right now, our community is probably as divided as it has ever been. We can't solve all of the problems that divide us, but with conversation we can begin to try.

PLEASE JOIN US.

--Thomas and Juanita Brown

RESOURCE MINISTRIES *Finance Team Report*

Our Finance Chair, Rick Calhoon, asked the congregation to contribute beyond their pledge amounts to help get us through the year. Seventeen families stepped up to contribute \$16,900—an amount that will go a long way towards meeting our 2017 operating expenses. We owe these contributors a big THANK YOU! We still need funds to carry us through the last month or two of the year, so if you can chip in, please let Rick Calhoon know.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES
BLANKET SUNDAY
Mother's Day, May 14th

Have you been hearing “Really, I don’t *need* a thing!” or “Please don’t give me any more dust catchers—we’re trying to downsize!” or similar exclamations when trying to find out what your mother would like for Mother’s Day? Are you a mother who’s actually been **saying** that? We’ve all heard or said something like this at some point and it gets harder to find a special gift for the occasion. How about giving (or suggesting) this **very** special gift—a donation in mother’s honor to Church World Service’s Blanket Sunday? Special cards and envelopes are available to give or send telling your mother that much good is being done in her name.

CWS provides many things to help around the world, but for Mother’s Day we stress the “nurturing” help symbolized by the blanket. A blanket can be used for warmth, for a pillow, or for shelter as an improvised tent. Other necessities provided include safe drinking water, health kits, and medical supplies. There will be leaflets on the table near the entrance describing the many ways in which our donations help those in need here at home and around the world. Those leaflets were printed some years ago so the dollar amounts indicated are slightly outdated but no amount is too small to donate as it all adds up!

To earmark a contribution for this, you can write “Blanket Sunday” in the memo part of your check, or enclose it (or cash) in the special “Tools & Blankets” envelopes which are available on the CWS display table—or ask an usher.

Check the website:

<https://cwsblankets.org/stories-and-reports/>
to see recent aid provided by this program.



Save the Date!

Our next Blood Drive will be on **Monday June 12th**. More information will follow in next month’s issue of *The Word*, but be sure to save the date—and get those iron-rich foods on hand! If you aren’t able to donate, perhaps you’d be able to help out in another way. Check the weekly announcements and the ledge in the narthex beginning in the middle of May.

GOING GREEN

...Cash Register Receipts

Q: Can paper cash-register receipts be safely recycled? What about added to compost? I've read that receipts have high levels of bisphenol A (BPA), which is an endocrine disruptor.

A: The short answer is no to both. Most receipts are "thermal" paper, printed via a heat process instead of with old-fashioned ink. The paper requires a fairly large infusion of BPA for the numbers to appear. When it gets recycled with other kinds of paper, it potentially ends up in products like shopping bags—or even toilet paper—which

give you a more intimate contact with the chemical than you want. Organizations such as the National Institutes of Health, the Mayo Clinic, and even the American Chemical Society warn that BPA may be harmful, especially to children and developing fetuses.

So it's better to be safe than sorry: Just put your receipts in the regular trash, where the BPA will be more isolated from the environment.

Trashing receipts is not the gravest of sins, since they amount to a tiny fraction of all paper consumed, according to industry sources. But there's a better choice: Opt out of getting a sales receipt in the first place, or ask the clerk to email it to you. Speaking of clerks, they may be in more danger from BPA than the rest of us because they constantly handle thermal paper. By ditching the receipt, you'll do yourself, the planet, and that hardworking sales clerk a favor.

BY BOB SCHILDGEN | MAR 6 2017
SIERRA CLUB NEWLETTER

STILL GOING GREEN

Plastic

Think about all the plastic you use in your daily life: The straw and cup for this morning's iced coffee? The forks for that work event or child's birthday party? Simply put, plastic is everywhere. Areport from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation shows that by 2050, it's expected to outnumber fish in the ocean by weight.

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, Americans use upwards of 100 billion plastic bags a year—and 12 million barrels of oil are required to manufacture them. Plastic pollution claims the lives of fish, birds, and endangered species. And because it's so durable, every bit of plastic ever created still exists. Plastic pollution is the most telling evidence of our damaging, single-use economy, and change comes down to our basic consumption practices.

For instance, in almost every restaurant and coffee shop, you can be sure to spy the thin silhouette of a plastic straw. More often than not, straws go on to find their way into the wild—both oceans and forests. Refuse a straw in the restaurant. Look for and buy bamboo straws, sporks and plates made by Bambu, which uses bamboo grown without pesticides.

BY ALEXANDRA MALLOY | APR 5 2017
SIERRA CLUB

RESOURCE MINISTRIES:

Stewardship/Finance Team

Use Qualified Charitable Distributions for Required Minimum Distributions

If you're planning to give money to charity while you're receiving required minimum distributions from a traditional IRA, using a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) can reduce the income taxes on your Social Security benefits. A QCD allows you to donate your required minimum distribution from your traditional IRA directly to a charity so it doesn't get reported as taxable income.

To perform a QCD, request that the financial institution holding your IRA pay the money directly to a qualifying charity. QCDs are limited to \$100,000 per person, per year. So if you're married filing jointly, you can each apply \$100,000 of required distributions to QCDs. Because the distribution isn't included in your taxable income, you can't report it as a charitable deduction.

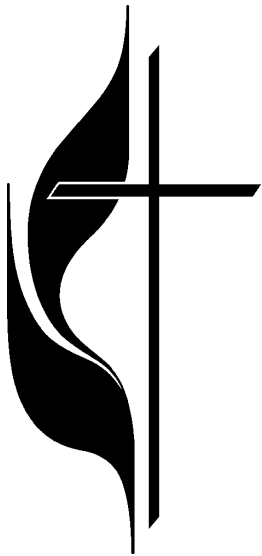
If you exclude your IRA distribution from taxable income, you can reduce the portion of Social Security benefits subject to income taxes. By contrast, if you take the distribution and then make a charitable contribution, your combined income will be increased by the amount of the distribution.

The Word

St. Thomas U M C

*St. Thomas United Methodist
Church*

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*Join us for
Worship
Every Sunday
10:00 a.m.*