



THE UNITED

South Avenue United Methodist Church

A UNION OF CHRIST, ROSS AVENUE AND SOUTH AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES



February 2024

733 South Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15221

Phone: 412-371-7421

www.SouthAvenueUMC.org
Conference web site: www.wpaumc.org

Pastor's email: Pastor@southavenueumc.org.
National web site: www.umc.org

FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART

FEBRUARY 2024

The word 'normal' has been voiced many times in the Shuluga household in the past week. Nancy's mantra has been, "I want life to be as 'normal' as possible. I went to the dictionary and looked up the word normal, Webster defines normal as: usual, typical or as expected. Our reality is, as of Wednesday, January 17, 2024 our lives are anything but normal. As you know, Nancy has received the diagnosis of stage 4 pancreatic cancer that has metastasized to the liver and beyond. This devastating diagnosis has turned our lives upside down and has violently thrown our normal out the window. We find ourselves grasping at any tiny bit of normalcy in our lives. There is comfort and reassurance in that which is 'normal'. There is a sense of control over one's life when there is normalcy. Our normalcy has been replaced with the realization of how fragile and precious life is. Our new normal is filled with hospital stays, CAT scans, MRI's, one procedure after another, blood work, and visits to the cancer center.

A song that keeps coming to mind is a song by the Beatles... 'Yesterday'

*"Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away
Now it looks as though they're here to stay
Oh, I believe in yesterday
Suddenly, I'm not half the man I used to be
There's a shadow hanging over me
Oh, yesterday came suddenly..."*

As I find myself longing for yesterday I cling to what will always be 'normal'...what will always be a constant and never change in any of our lives and that is God. God never promises any of us a pain free...grief free...trouble free life. God does promise to never leave us. God does promise strength in the midst of the storm. God does promise comfort when life is turned upside down. God does promise peace, a peace the world cannot give nor take away. God promises us that death does not have the last word. God promises that death is not an ending but a whole new beginning. So I am wrapping myself in God's 'normal' like a warm and fuzzy blanket on a cold winter's night.

I thank you for your prayers in this most difficult journey. I thank you for your patience, support and understanding. God has blessed Nancy and I with the gift of you.

When you find yourself grasping for 'normal' when 'normal' has been tossed out the window I invite you to wrap yourself in God's 'normal'.

There are words to another song I am embracing, "It Is Well with My Soul",

*"When peace, like a river,
attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot,
thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul..."*

Blessings,

Pastor Russel

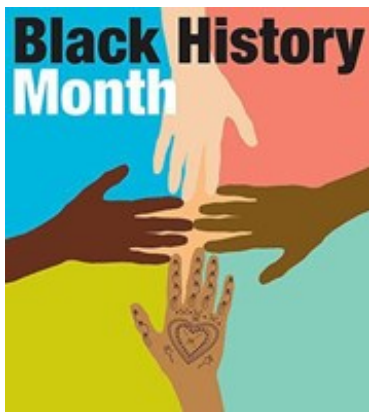
ASH WEDNESDAY

Our Ash Wednesday observance will be a combined service at South Avenue UMC on February 14, 2024 at 7:00 pm.



FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

We look forward to Deborah Webb introducing us to memorable people we may not have heard of. Look in the Church Family News for Deborah's articles. We thank Deborah for expanding our knowledge of our American heritage.



PRESIDENT'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED

The Church Office will be closed on Monday, February 19th in observance of President's Day.



YEAR-END GIVING STATEMENTS

The Giving Statements for 2024 have been distributed. If you did not receive one, or if you find errors or have questions, please contact the Church Office and someone will get back to you.



GENEROSITY REPORT

During the year the Church asks for donations for various local projects and special Sunday designations by the Conference. Here's a summary for 2023:

Human Relations	\$50
UMCOR Donations*	\$2445
Native American Awareness	\$65
Peace With Justice	\$116
Student Day Sunday	\$190
World Communion Sunday	\$40
Wilkinsburg Comm. Ministry*	\$2595

*Includes Easter and Christmas Offerings

Your support as members and friends of South Ave. UMC for these requests is much appreciated.

FINAL CROP WALK RESULTS

Here is very good news. The 2023 CROP Walk results are in. The final tally is \$28,000+, not as great as last year, but still a nice amount. Remember 25% of this comes back to support Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. Your many contributions helped make this all possible. The local committee thanks you very, very much.

ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME

2023

CROP HUNGER WALK

BUILDING *global* RESILIENCE

SARA CIRCLE

Sarah Circle will have a combined Women's Ministries board meeting and circle program on February 12 at 12:30pm. Bring your lunch. Beverage will be provided.

The Board will meet first and then Sharon will lead us in preparing the Menstrual Hygiene Kits for UMCOR. We look forward to sharing time with each other during these cold days.

Nancy Patterson, Chairperson

LONGWOOD CIRCLE

The Longwood Circle will meet Thursday, February 8 at 12:00 at Longwood of Oakmont. Following lunch in the grill, Janet Stivanson will lead a program and discussion. All women are invited to join this group.

Janet Stivanson, Chairperson



FUTURE PLANS FOR THE WOMEN

Women's Ministries Board has decided to no longer be a member of United Women in Faith. We do want to continue with our mission work in the Wilkinsburg area. We will no longer have fundraisers but would like to request continued financial support from our congregation, our friends and our Circle members. Checks (made payable to UMW-SAUMC) or cash can be sent to Mabel Matteson, 54 Garden Court, Verona, PA 15147 or dropped in the Church Office.

DONATIONS OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES IN 2023

Women's Ministries (United Women in Faith) is very happy to report another successful year for our mission projects. This was possible because of some large donations by our members and friends in the congregation. We are truly thankful for this support.

Our year-end giving for 2023 totaled \$600, down from last year, but still a good result. This amount was approved at the business meeting held at the Christmas Get Together on December 14. These monies are in addition to the annual pledge to missions sent through the District United Women in Faith (United Methodist Women) of \$800 and an annual contribution of \$25 to the national Legacy Fund.

Recipients for 2023 include continuing support of the Ruth M. Smith Home at Sheffield, PA, June Mathias of Wycliffe Bible Translators and Bruce and Pat Rathbun's efforts in France through Mission to the World.

Also continuing this year are funds sent to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and Wilkinsburg Community Ministry.

Our members extend our heartfelt thanks to all of you for your help in raising these monies which are going all over the world as well as in our local community.



UNITED DEADLINE

The deadline for the March United will be Monday, February 26. Leave articles in the church office or email them to Helen McAfoos at hmcafoos@comcast.net.