Dear Valley Friends,

I never stopped believing in learning. But I hadn’t been in a specific class, with a specific learnable skill, for a long time. I remembered what that’s like last fall when I signed up for swimming lessons, and had a teacher, and was given things to practice, and to master.

It’s not like swimming was totally new to me. I had lessons from older cousins and from the Red Cross when I was a girl, and I learned to feel safe around water. I learned to tread water and do the back float (my very favorite thing). And I could always dog paddle with the best of them! But I never mastered the breathing-while-swimming part of the American crawl.

But when Dan and I found ourselves signed up at a gym last fall with a great pool, I saw the notices about lessons, and I was in.

And—somewhat to my surprise—I learned to swim! I learned the crawl, the backstroke, the side stroke, and I can at least approximate the breaststroke. It was a delight to realize this old dog could learn some new tricks.

As a lifelong churchgoer, there have been some seasons where I knew I was supposed to learn things. Growing up, I went to Sunday School, and to confirmation class. I remember a youth group unit about heaven and hell, and another about (ahem) relationships and even a bit of sex ed. But once I became an adult, you could say I “put away childish things” and didn’t really think about there being much more for me to learn. I attended worship, most weeks, and sometimes I’d go to a Sunday School or other group. But I didn’t think about there being things to practice. And I wasn’t really trying to master anything. (Well, other than my children….)

Where kids are concerned, we expect learning to happen. This is the week when we surely all agree on that. It’s why we’re sending our kids back to school in person, or pledging to support their learning virtually. It’s why some of us as grown-ups have taken on the work of teaching or otherwise supporting what happens in school. This annual ritual of returning to school happens because we know our kids have more to learn. We go on to higher education, because we want to learn more, or earn a degree that will open certain doors to us. We invest a big part of our early years in this learning enterprise.

I wonder, what would happen if we approached our faith with that kind of clarity? Of course there are things to learn, whether we’re eight or eighty. How could we believe that we’ve plumbed the depths of God, the fullness of grace, the power of love? In baptism we promise to nurture one another in our Christian faith and life. We don’t say we’ll do that “for awhile.” It’s a promise that extends across decades and experiences and crises and joys.

During September we’ll consider what it would mean to go “back to school” where our faith is concerned. We’ll say “yes” to learning prayer, knowing the Bible, discerning the will of God, and more. Grab your backpack and sharpen your No. 2 pencils; we’ve got work to do!

Blessings,
Pastor Lee
MISSION AND OUTREACH

DMARC FOOD PANTRY
You may still make donations for Food Pantry items-just leave at the lower level doors during office hours or make a monetary donation by noting “Food Pantry” on your check. $625 August donations

WDM HUMAN SERVICES SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE
Thanks to all who made donations to help the school children in our WDM community!

A backpack stuffed with school supplies, 26 additional backpacks were drop shipped and a check for $300 was delivered to West Des Moines Human Services for their annual back to school supply distribution.

COG – a coalition of West Des Moines churches actively and collaboratively involved in Christian community service since the 1960s.

PERSONAL CARE ITEM DRIVE
Now that donations are being accepted again at WDM Human Services, you can feel free to drop off items at the church if you wish. The needs have continued and will be great in the coming months. The focus for this month is laundry detergent or if you are able to donate any personal care items, they are much needed and much appreciated at anytime.

WDMHS was delighted to receive our tub filled with laundry soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, diapers and canned goods.

STORM CLEAN UP AT VALLEY UMC

Thank you to all who helped out with clean up after the August 10 Derecho storm! It took the efforts of many to clear the parking lot and church yard.

♦ Rose Donati
♦ All of those suffering with illness and COVID-19
♦ Students, teachers, employees and administrators as schools resume this month
♦ Women at the Well
♦ Pastor Lee and the mission and ministry at Valley UMC
♦ Our nation and state leaders for vision and strength

WDM HUMAN SERVICES SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

In Mission Together
CWS BLANKET PROGRAM
For many years our church has been involved with the Church World Service Blanket Program. Our donations help to keep our neighbors warm by providing blankets to families here in the United States and around the world. Church World Service works in partnership with local communities to identify their needs and access the resources they need to build the foundation for a more viable future.

Help people around the world recover from disasters and get a fresh start!

It only takes $10 to buy a blanket for someone in need. Make a difference in the lives of others by making a donation for CWS.

Can we match the 150 blankets donated in 2019?

CFUM MEALS AT TRINITY UMC
Since Covid-19 restrictions began in March, approximately 100 “to go” meals are handed out at Trinity UMC each weekday. Many of these meals are purchased from local restaurants for about $5 each.

We sent a $500 financial contribution to cover our July Supper Club commitment, and continue to accept donations for September and November meals.

Thank you for your ongoing generosity!

2020 DERECHO STORM RELIEF
HOW WE CAN HELP TODAY

- PRAY and pray some more. This storm has devastated Iowa, communities and crops. MANY, MANY are impacted. YOUR PRAYERS are NEEDED. It is in prayer that we unleash God’s power for one another.

- VOLUNTEER. Help in needed in over 150 communities. Communities looking for help have listed times and locations for volunteer check in and contact numbers on their social media pages and city web pages. Check with the community in which you wish to volunteer for those details. The Volunteer Disaster Agencies in Iowa (Including the United Methodists) are all working together with the local city government to meet as many needs in as many communities as possible.

- CONTACT. If you know someone who has been impacted by the storm; contact them! Call and offer words of encouragement and listen to them. Actual voice to voice contact makes a huge difference in time of loss and disaster. Ask them what they need, AND GET IT FOR THEM. If someone comes to mind, there is a reason for it, be God’s hands and heart and reach out.

- DONATE FINANCIALLY. Donations can be given thru the United Methodist Church Advance Special #223. ALL donations are used for supporting and helping Iowans affected by these storms.

CONVERSATIONS ON RACISM
We’re rolling out an additional opportunity to join a conversation on racism and systemic injustice. We’ll meet on Zoom, on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 8:00-9:00 p.m. beginning Tuesday, September 8.

Our conversation will center on books we read together, starting with Austin Channing Brown’s I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness. All are welcome to join in and we hope you’ll pass along this invitation to others for who might want to join. Questions? Contact Pastor Lee (515/218-1376 or pastorlee@valleyumc.org).

Our daytime group, Thursdays at 2:00 p.m. will start a new book on September 10, Ibram X. Kendi’s How To Be an Antiracist.

It would be a great time to join us!
SPECIAL OUTDOOR SERVICE PLANNED

Service of Remembrance

We will take another opportunity to be together (masked and social distanced) outdoors on **Sunday, September 13 at 5:00 p.m.** for a Service of Remembrance. This will be a time to honor and reflect on the lives of our Valley UMC Brothers and Sisters and any other friends or loved ones who have passed in this season of Covid-19.

FINANCE UPDATE

At mid-year, the Finance Committee is reporting that our Net Income which reflects the difference between Total Receipts and Total Expenses is essentially on plan. Thank you all for your continued faithfulness in your financial giving.

We do want to emphasize that COVID-19 continues to impact our church families, extended families and our community. Because of this, we want to share there is some risk that that giving may come in lower than budgeted in the second half of the year. We have taken proactive actions to participate in the Payment Protection Program which provides a very low interest loan to support continuing staff payroll. Additionally, if we observe a decline in net income, we intend to make needed adjustments in budget spending to maintain the financial health of our church.

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to reach out to Finance Committee members Michael Hayes or Charity Coates.

VALLEY UMC FOUNDATION MINUTE

THANK YOU FOR MEMORIAL GIFTS

The Valley UMC Foundation thanks all of those who have contributed memorial gifts to the Foundation this year. The Foundation Board has taken the position that we will educate and remind Parishioners about the Foundation and gifting opportunities, especially planned gifts as a part of your estate plan. Nevertheless, it is a bit of a tradition to give to the Foundation in memory of loved ones and those who have been a part of the Valley United Methodist Church family for many years.

As of this writing the Foundation has received a total of $2,755 in memorial gifts this year. Some donors have asked that the money will be given to one of the three funds, the Capital Improvement Fund, the Scholarship Fund or the Bud & Sue Potts Mission Fund. If you do not designate a fund, the money will be divided among the three funds in the same proportion that the funds currently bear to each other.

Currently, the money is held in an endowment meaning that only the increases in value are being used to fund capital projects, scholarships, and missions.

Questions about memorial gifts and the Foundation may be directed to any Valley UMC Foundation Board member. They are Doyle Sanders, Ginny Midkiff, Rose Donati, Rick Santi, John Bruckshaw, Scott Schmailzl, Dave Stensrud, Mike Hommer, and Phyllis Pearson.

NEXT STEPS - RAINBOW FLAG AND CROSS

A big thanks to so many who joined in our conversations last month about the outdoor cross and the rainbow flags. It was a great example of how it’s possible to share perspectives in a kind and open manner. Thirty-five people joined in one or both of the conversations.

At our Administrative Leadership Team meeting in August, we discussed two main takeaways from those gatherings: 1) There appears to be broad support for maintaining some visible sign of welcome to our LGBTQ siblings, both on grounds and on our website; and 2) Most agree that message should be communicated somewhere other than on the cross.

We will gather a group of interested persons to work as a team to make a recommendation in the next month or two about that flag or other sign of welcome. **If you are interested in joining that team**, please be in touch with Pastor Lee or Sheila in the church office. Until that team’s work is completed, Pastor Lee has been asked to place an interim rainbow marker. If you have questions or concerns about any of this, please be in touch with Pastor Lee.
TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE FOR VUMC

If you have been logging on to our Youtube channel during these months after Covid-19 struck, you probably have noticed some obvious needs for improving our livestream productions.

We have been using a laptop computer with a camera and a microphone attached. It works okay for a speaker standing directly in front of the computer, but to stream music, slides or videos, the simple laptop with its one microphone limitation simply cannot produce a good quality program.

Our Administrative Leadership Team selected a small group to work on finding a way to upgrade our technology equipment. The long and short of it is, we now have a proposal approved by the Leadership Team.

In a nutshell, here it is: Two high quality camcorders with tripods and all the accessories required and a 4 channel HD A/V mixer. The mixer will be installed in our present sound booth. The mixer will receive the sound signal from our present audio system and will mix that with the video feed. It will then forward the finished product to Youtube or Facebook or whatever other media we may wish to use. The result will be a much improved “professional quality” production.

In addition to the cameras and mixer, we will purchase a large screen TV for the Fellowship Hall which will enable groups to meet live, and also include Zoom participants. The proposal also includes TV monitors to position near the building’s entrance doors on which to project announcements and useful information to our members and guests.

Here’s the clincher: Pastor Lee’s son, Gabe, is experienced in this work. He has successfully completed this kind of installation in several churches and other venues. And he has agreed to handle our project at no cost and will help us with training volunteers to operate the A/V system.

So this article is an invitation to all who might be called and able to support this purchase financially. We estimate a total cost of $7,500.

If you would like to help, please send a check to Valley UMC with “Technology” in the memo line.

Thank you!
Clare DeBoef
Technology Upgrade Committee

DEMOCRACY, VALUES & THE 2020 ELECTION: A Reflection Guide for Faith Communities

Faith in Public Life and Interfaith Power & Light are excited to release a voter reflection guide: Democracy, Values & the 2020 Election: A Reflection Guide for Faith Communities. The nonpartisan guide offers timely sections that address urgent moral issues at stake in this election and beyond. Topics include justice for immigrants, economic dignity, care for creation and climate change, racism and criminal justice reform, democracy and voting rights, health care and the coronavirus pandemic, and global peacebuilding. Reflection questions are included to help spark conversation in your faith communities and to help prime questions addressed to candidates running for office. If you would like to download the guide, please follow this link: https://interfaith-powerandlight.salsalabs.org/voterguidedownload/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=263a6ec4-cc7b-4f38-bd59-d095787f7520

Thank you to Valley UMC friends for your cards, calls and prayers after my recent heart surgery.
-Bob Johnson

Thank you to Valley UMC friends for your cards, calls and prayers after my recent heart surgery.

LIKE us and SHARE our Facebook posts:

Valley United Methodist Church

REACHING UP, REACHING OUT, REACHING IN

At Valley UMC we’re REACHING UP to experience a bold, passionate, life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ, REACHING OUT to witness through nurture and service, and REACHING IN to challenge ourselves toward discipleship and spiritual growth.

Valley UMC WEBSITE
Watch Pastor Lee’s worship services, read the Valley Views, calendars, bulletins and much more by visiting our website:

www.valleyumc.org

Livestream Sunday morning worship at 9:00 a.m. on Youtube: ValleyUMC