

## **Meet Deacon Greg Lawton, Minister of Spiritual Formation**

What a joy it is to be with you in ministry in Jackson. I am looking forward to all the ways we will grow and learn together as we seek first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness.

If I had a biography, the title might be "Reluctant Trailblazer." I have been the first person to hold most of the positions I've had professionally and if not the first, each job has changed dramatically while it was mine to do. So, it is fitting that I arrive here as your Minister of Spiritual Formation with many questions about what that will mean and look like. As such, I'd like to share about my own spiritual formation.

I was born in Watervliet, Michigan to George and Beverly Lawton and three older siblings. A younger brother joined us later on. My folks were very active lay people at the United Methodist Church where I was baptized and where I learned the songs of faith. We lived there until I was 12 when my dad got a new job in Plainwell, Michigan. It was a difficult move for us but eventually provided opportunities that would not have happened in Watervliet. In Plainwell, youth leaders taught me how to prepare retreats and to give my time for the needs of others and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at Lake Louise High School Camp. After high school I attended Ferris State University under the illusion that I would become an Optometrist. While at Ferris I made the conscious decision to not attend any faith groups, but I could feel the presence of God guiding me at crucial moments. After the fourth year of a seven-year program in Optometry, I decided to change course and transferred to Western Michigan to pursue a degree in Hydrogeology. There, I became active with the Wesley Foundation and my faith and experience deepened as I discovered worship leadership gifts to share.

With my degree, I worked in Kalamazoo as an environmental consultant for several years while also volunteering at Milwood UMC and at Lake Louise. I also went on a Walk to Emmaus. I was eventually hired by Milwood to help organize ministries for children and youth. Becoming involved at church led to countless opportunities to serve, learn, and engage in faith. That led me to want to gain more education and leadership experience, so I enrolled at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and received an MA in Christian Education. Seminary challenged every one of my preconceived notions about faith, the Bible, and social justice, and I emerged more compassionate, grounded, and grace filled.

Besides while working in churches and on campuses, I've also been formed by many events outside of a congregation. While in Grand Ledge, I was trained as a conflict mediator and helped run a restorative justice program for students through the Lansing School District, coming to see myself as one of Christ's peacemakers. I've been enlivened by the words and wisdom of the ancient Celtic (Irish) church and apply those insights to my personal devotional life. My life was transformed when I became the Dean of Big Kids Camp, an annual spiritual retreat for young adults. My life was transformed again when invited to take teams of college students to Africa University in Zimbabwe.

And again, I was transformed by the Spirit of God when accepting a position to work and live in Lithuania. I've been on many mission trips and often wondered, "What if you stay?" Serving overseas for three semesters answered that and changed my perspective on life, family, spiritual renewal, self-care, and global, social awareness.

These are some of the ways I've been formed and transformed by God's grace. There are others to share and more stories to tell. We'll have time for those. I pray that your life has had some of these elements and that we are all open to seeing where the Spirit is leading us to know "the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18-19)."



## Sunday Adult Bible Study

The Adult Bible class will begin to meet in person on October 4, at 9:15AM. We use the United Methodist study books that help us relate the Bible to our lives today. Background information gives us a clearer understanding of the life and times in which the passages were written, The theme for October is "Remember Who You Are" and reminds us to reform our identity as God's people.

We welcome you to join us. There is no preparation for the class and all are welcome. Because of the current virus restrictions, we ask that you call the church if you plan on attending. This will help us determine the room for proper social distancing. You will receive further information as we get closer to the date.

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## Family and Children's Ministries

Deacon Greg is publishing a weekly "playlist" with faith formation practices for families at home. If you want to be in this blog's email distribution, please contact him at [glawton@firstumcjackson.org](mailto:glawton@firstumcjackson.org).

If you have school aged children and want to participate in our Church Buddies program which matches kids with seasoned adults in the congregation, let Deacon Greg know.

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## Youth Group is Back!

We (sixth—twelfth grade) are meeting on Sunday nights from 6-8pm. We will use the good weather as long as we are able and meet outside in the church parking lot, backyards, and parks. ( Inside we will socially distance and wear masks.)



Your Youth leaders are working hard to be creative in making sure we are all safe while we gather, eat, play, and pray.

We met for the first time again on September 13 in the church parking lot. We played some quarantine-skill games, ate walking tacos, and tie-dyed face masks.



## Wellness Team Update

Even though COVID-19 has changed things, the Wellness Team has still been helping our community. We have changed the way we do things, but still have been able to show God's love and grace.

We had to get creative. We changed the Fresh Food Distribution to a drive thru event, and did the same for the Back to School Blast—Resource Fair.

The first week of the pandemic, we missed the Fresh Food Distribution. We had to re-think and develop a plan of how we could distribute food safely. The Food Bank started sending food, pre-boxed, to allow for the drive up process.

As time went on, our attendance dropped. Due to the pandemic, more and more distribution sites popped up. This made us take a time-out, from the end of July to September 28th. We again had to re-evaluate, and adjust our plans to meet the needs of our community.

We had planned two fundraisers that were not able to take place, due to COVID.

We asked the Food Bank for help. They have generously given us a \$1,200 grant, which is to cover 1 distribution a month thru 2020. We need to come up with \$900 to cover the remaining monthly distribution and meet the need of 2 distributions per month.

The Wellness Team is coming to you, to ask for your help in covering the \$900.

We are having a virtual Bake Sale on November 22nd. It will be the easiest Bake sale ever to participate in—no baking, no mess, and no calories. What more could you ask for?

Just make a donation to the Wellness Team, for whatever you would like to give for the Fresh Food Distribution program. Such as, the cost of a pie or cake, etc. Drop your donation in the offering basket, or mail it to the church, on or before November 22nd. Mark the envelope, or check "Wellness Team Bake Sale".

We are completing a grant application for the 2021 year, with the hopes that it will help a great deal with funding.

Thank you for you thoughts , prayers, and all your gifts and donations, now and through the years. This will be the 6th year for FUMC helping our community reduce hunger and food insecurity.

Back to School Blast—Resource Fair was very successful this year even with the change to a drive-thru. That meant no extras, which we have provided in the past, but we were still able to help our youth get ready for the new school year. FUMC distributed 863 backpacks stuffed with school supplies and a reusable face mask. A Big Thank You to our volunteers and sponsors.

Blessings,

The Wellness Team



## Friends to Dine Outside One Last Time This Year!

On October 15th at 6pm the Never Without a Friend ladies friendship group will meet at Mancino's for dinner. In 2017 Mancino's moved to their new location at 3017 Wildwood Ave. This year they added a new outdoor patio and weather permitting, that's where we'll have dinner. If the weather is inclement we'll move inside. Their menu has a large selection of appetizers, salads, grinders, calzones, pizza, and pasta dishes. Come and enjoy the evening with an evening relaxing and catching up with friends! Remember new friends are always welcomed! **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**– contact Candy Poleski for reservations or more information.

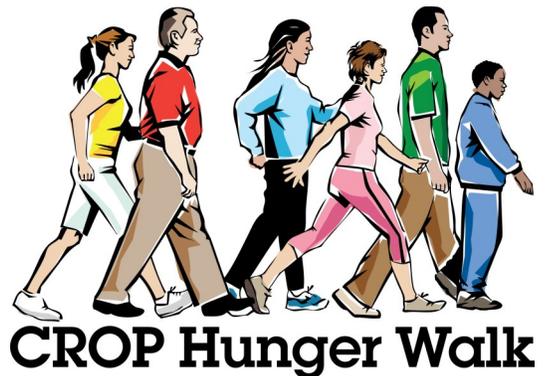
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## CROP Hunger Walk Is Around the Corner

Final plans are in place for FUMC's 2020 CROP Hunger Walk. Due to COVID-19 we've decided to have lots of walks by families and neighborhood groups. Pull a small group together, pick a walking route that suits you and, for that matter, pick your own day and time. The Jackson "walk" is technically at 1:00PM on Sunday, October 11, but no one will mind if you vary from that. There are no forms to fill out or lists to sign up on.

The following folks have already committed to the walk: Carole Briggs, Brian Clark, Mo Dedrick, Karen Hackett, John Hawthorne, Janelle Lantz, Janet Lapp, the Leitch Family, Melinda Long, Betsy Meyers, the Micheel Family, Grace & Lytle Miller, Max Waagner, Elaine Wagner, Bonnie Woodring and the Youts. All are encouraged to form their own mini-walk or to sponsor some of the folks above. Just send a check made out to CWS/CROP to the church or drop it in the offering plate. You can also donate online at [www.crophungerwalk.org/jacksonmi/fumc](http://www.crophungerwalk.org/jacksonmi/fumc).

Although much is different this year, one thing that has not changed is our commitment to raise funds to fight hunger around the world and right here in Jackson. Twenty five percent of all that we raise comes back to fight hunger in Jackson and 25% of that comes to our After School Pack Program and Fresh Food Initiative at FUMC.



Thank you Rev. Tonya, Deacon Greg, and everyone most sincerely for your prayers and good thoughts at the time of my recent surgery. Also, the many cards, emails, and phone calls of support as I move toward a full recovery, have provided a lot of encouragement. The knowledge of God's presence with Ellen and me throughout the past few weeks has been most reassuring and we are very grateful.

*Barry Keatley (3 John 14)*

## **Attention United Methodist Women**

If you have one of the blue World Thank Offering boxes we are requesting that you count the amount of money in your box and mail a check to the church directed to United Methodist Women and World Thank on the memo line. We are trying to limit the hands on handling of boxes and money. Thank you

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### **Women's Guild Fellowship to Delay Meetings Until January 2021**

After some discussion with several of our Women's Guild Fellowship members and with the UMW Board members, we have decided to wait until January before returning each month to the church for our meetings. The restrictions are limiting the number of people who can attend and no meal will be provided. Although we may decide to have a "ZOOM" holiday meeting with UMW in December, our "face to face" meetings will be on hold for now. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Melinda Long. In the meantime, please stay healthy and safe and know that God is with us on the journey and we will one day see each other again.

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### **UMCOR- Relief Needed**

Hurricanes Laura and Sally have caused untold human suffering and property damage, devastation from which it will take a long time to recover. And then there are the fires burning in the western states.

The wildfire crisis ravaging California for weeks took a dramatic turn and spread into the Pacific Northwest, feeding off dry conditions and strong winds.

The fires have led to at least 35 reported deaths, consumed more than 3 million acres in California, almost 1 million acres in Oregon, and destroyed entire towns in Washington.

Following a hurricane or tornado, the natural response for church disaster relief teams and volunteer is to spring into action immediately, descending on the affected area with whatever is needed—chainsaws, generators, bottled water, and food.

Such a response isn't possible in a wildfire. Many are expected to burn for several more weeks before containment. Michigan's disaster response officials say that the best way to help is to support UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response and Relief Advance # 901670. You can mail your check and mark it for Disaster Response with the advance number or leave it in the plate on Sunday if you worship in the sanctuary to provide aid to those affected by the wildfires and hurricanes.

## United Methodist Women Gathering for 1st Time Since Pandemic

United Methodist Women plan to gather this Fall for a combination meeting of in person and virtual. We need your input as to whether you prefer to attend in person or virtually via Zoom.

Lynn Newhouse will join us either in person or via Zoom. United Methodist Women has supported Lynn for many years, and she is happy and anticipating sharing what her ministry is with NOVO (recently changed from CRM- Church Resource Ministries). NOVO is "To Make New".

Meeting; November 5, 2020 at 2:00pm

There will be no food from the kitchen or shared. You may bring a drink and/or a snack for yourself if coming in person.

Our callers will be calling a week before November 5th. We welcome everyone, if you are not called, please call the church (517-787-6460). Reservations for in person are a must so that we can be placed in an appropriate sized room to maintain social distancing. We hope you will join us in this new gathering endeavor.



### A PLANTING PARABLE

Jesus had to explain his Parable of the Sower to the confused disciples.

*Directions: Use the word bank to answer the clues. Then fill in the correct words below to complete Matthew 13:23, NIV.*

**WORD BANK:** sow, soil, wither, root, thorn, crop, seed, farmer

- Plant part that absorbs water .....
- Contains what's needed to grow a plant .....
- To plant .....
- Sharp part of a plant .....
- What is harvested. ....
- To dry up and shrivel .....
- Person who plants .....
- The earth a plant grows in. ....

"But the \_\_\_\_\_<sub>2</sub> falling on good \_\_\_\_\_<sub>8</sub> refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a \_\_\_\_\_<sub>5</sub>, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was \_\_\_\_\_<sub>3</sub> n."

MATTHEW 13:23, NIV

ANSWERS: root, seed, soil, wither, farmer, soil, seed, soil, crop, soil

## SEED impressions

Create autumn-themed artwork using items from plants.



**What you need:**

- Seed pods, nuts, pine cones
- Mixing bowl
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup warm water
- Adult help

**What you do:**

- Go on a nature walk and collect seeds with interesting textures.
- In the bowl, mix flour and salt. Gradually add water. On a table, knead the dough. (If too dry, add more water; if too sticky, add more flour.)
- Flatten a ball of dough and stamp impressions in it with the seeds.
- If desired, bake for several hours at 150 degrees until dry and hard. Or, to reuse dough, store in an airtight container up to 6 months.

# October

2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				01 10:30AM United Methodist Women Board Meeting	02 10:00AM School Pack Packing 12:00 PM Food for Thought	03 Lee Zimmerman 11:30AM Visitation 12:00PM Memorial Service
04 WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY 9:15AM Adult Bible Study 10:30AM Worship 4:00PM Youts Sunday School 5:00PM Genesis Rehearsal 6:00PM Yout Group	05 5:30PM Church Conference	06 2:00PM Staff Meeting	07 5:30PM Carillon Ringers 6:30PM Journeymen	08 4:30PM Belle Canto	09 10:00AM School Pack Packing 12:00PM Food for Thought	10
11 CROP Walk –virtual 9:15AM Adult Bible Study 10:30AM Worship 4:00PM Youts Sunday School 5:00PM Genesis Rehearsal 6:00PM Yout Group	12 1:30PM Fresh Food Distribution	13 2:00PM Staff Meeting 5:30PM Finance Meeting	14 5:30PM Carillon Ringers	15 6:00PM Never w/o a Friend— RSVP	16 10:00AM School Pack Packing 12:00PM Food for Thought	17
18 9:15AM Adult Bible Study 10:30AM Worship 4:00PM Youts Sunday School 5:00PM Genesis Rehearsal 6:00PM Yout Group	19 5:30PM Leadership Council Meeting	20 9:30AM Tuesday Bible Study 2:00PM Staff Meeting 5:30PM Board of Trustees Meeting	21 5:30PM Carillon Ringers 6:30PM Journeymen	22 4:30PM Personal Care Ministries 4:30PM Belle Canto	23 10:00AM School Pack Packing 12:00PM Food for Thought	24
25 9:15AM Adult Bible Study 10:30AM Worship 4:00PM Youts Sunday School 5:00PM Genesis Rehearsal 6:00PM Yout Group	26 1:30PM Fresh Food Distribution	27 9:30AM Tuesday Bible Study 2:00PM Staff Meeting 5:30PM SPRC	28 5:30PM Carillon Ringers	29	30	31

**Color Coding Key:**

Facebook & YouTube  
Zoom

YouTube  
Special Location

275 W. Michigan

First UMC Jackson  
275 W. Michigan  
Jackson, MI 49201

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**We are an inclusive, inter-generational faith community that  
loves God with our ♪ hearts....and hands...and voices♪**

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Office hours - Monday—Thursday 8:00am—4:00pm, Friday 8:00am—12:00pm

(Hours may vary based on staffing)

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FaceBook: First UMC Jackson

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Sunday Service broadcast on cable channel 19 & 902, 7:30pm Monday