



ALPHA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

211 North Scandia St., PO Box 607
Alpha, IL 61413
309-629-5161 | www.alphaumc.org

February 2023

Volume 2023 Issue 2

Bishop Beard's Monthly Letter:

LOVE!

The word "love" is overused and misunderstood by most Christians.



Unconditional love is a concept that nearly all Christian churches embrace and support but very few put into practice. Love has fallen on hard times among church folks. I believe that if we really understood the demands of love, as required by Jesus, we would quit tossing it about so casually.

Love led Jesus to empty himself and take on a role that was beneath himself in order that a broken, lost world could be saved. Love caused Jesus to deny himself the position, power and prestige that was rightly his, so that the will and plan of God would come to fruition. Love enabled Jesus to say, "not my will, but thy will be done."

How do you make sense of that which makes no sense? It does not make sense that a tired shepherd, at the end of a long day, would leave 99 sheep, to go out looking for one that was missing. Most would say that the loss is minimal and that losing one sheep is a part of the cost for doing business. Some would understand sending out a hired hand or a well-rested sheep wrangler that was in the business of sheep procurement. But Jesus, because he loves and values each lamb, traverses, and traces his steps until he finds the missing sheep.

In the IGRC the disaffiliation process has been civil, and non-combative. I have done my best to oversee a process that is mutually respectful, fair, transparent, and open. Most of the churches and pastors have been willing to accept my plea to "wait until we know what General Conference will do." I appreciate the restraint and the trust.

For the very small (but still important) percentage choosing to "get out now," I have deep concerns about the unintended carnage being left behind. I'm not sure that some seeking to disaffiliate have considered the message they are sending to members of their congregation that do not want to disaffiliate.

I'm sure that I do not understand the pressing need that would cause a congregation to leave a significant number of its members, those deciding that they want to remain United Methodist, out of the church's future. I cannot believe that splitting a church, separating from folks that you've worshipped with and fellowshiped with, is the way of Christ. I cannot believe that it is "Christlike" to tell folks that have been raised in a church facility that they now have to find a new place to worship because "our group" has voted "you and your group" out. At the end of the day, when all the dust settles, it is not about "honoring Jesus" or "upholding the Bible." It's about power and control. This type of power and control are never rooted and grounded in love.

Love is not a sentimental, mushy, goosy, feeling; real love is an intentional choice and a decision of the heart, soul, mind, and will. Real love is based on a total commitment to Jesus Christ, and a determination to love like Jesus, that is interwoven into the very fabric of one's being. Loving like Jesus requires that we live like Jesus lived. Jesus did not demand his own way, but he carefully listened and discerned God's directives. Above all, Jesus was committed to loving obedience.

Jesus knowing that Judas would betray him, loved Judas enough to wash his feet. Peter cursed and claimed that he did not know Jesus and never associated with Jesus, but Jesus cooked and fed Peter breakfast (an act of loving service) prior to restoring him into leadership. Jesus, while preparing to ascend, was aware that some in the crowd were "doubters" but Jesus still commissioned them to go share the gospel. Jesus loved unconditionally!

Prior to leaving, Jesus gave us a new commandment, recorded in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." He continued in John 13:35: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The 'disciple that Jesus loved, John the apostle' wrote in 1 John 3:16, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."

The challenge before us is simple. We can continue to choose "our way", or we can choose the difficult, often unclear, uncomfortable, complex, and complicated way of Christ, the way of unconditional love.

Jesus is surely saddened by the state of confusion and disharmony that we have allowed and accepted within the church body. Our acts of selfishness are a horrible witness to one another and within the communities we are called to love and to serve. Let's stop the foolishness and ask Jesus to teach us and enable us to love like he loves, unconditionally!

God Bless,

Bishop Beard

Church Council

- Council Chair: Lindi Kernan
- Treasurer: Parris Silvis
- Financial Secretary: Linda Lanning
- Trustees: TBD
- S/PPRC: Dale Lanning
- Outreach: Linda Lambin
- Nurture: Kelli Swanson
- Worship: Roger Swanson
- Christian Education: TBD
- Men in Mission: Dean Kernan
- Youth Representative: Jack Silvis
- Lay Leader: Lindi Kernan
- Recording Secretary: Desirae Silvis

**Next Council Meeting:
No February Meeting**

Church Office Hours

9AM - 1PM— Monday, Wednesday, Thursday

309-629-5161

alphaumc@gmail.com

Website: www.alphaumc.org

Facebook: [@alphaunitedmethodist.com](https://www.facebook.com/alphaunitedmethodist.com)

Pastor Karna's Contact Info:

Cell: 309-337-2700

email: pastorkarna56@yahoo.com

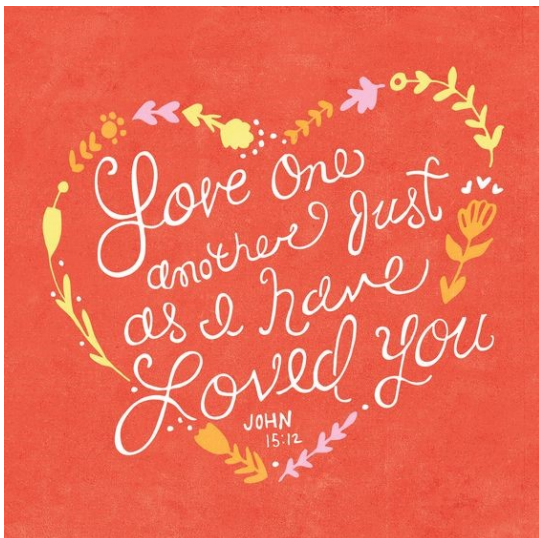
Let's Celebrate!

February Birthdays

- 02: Vicki Jordan Geiger
- 04: Bryton Brooks
- 16: Devin Reed
- 22: Ayla Catey

February Anniversaries

- 10: Ron & Linda Buban
- 13: Ron & Ruby Naslund



Join Us !

Sunday Schedule

On break until Feb. 28

9:30AM - Coffee Hour

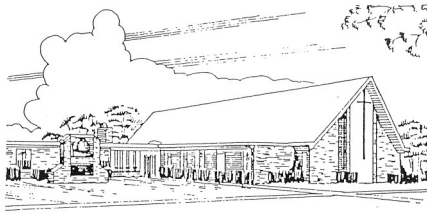
10:00AM - Worship

Bible Study

On Break Until

Prayer Group

Wednesdays 9:15AM



February Worship Volunteers

February 6

Liturgist: Roger Swanson

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Desirae & Jack Silvis

February 13

Liturgist: Devin Reed

Children's Moment: Angie Althaus

Ushers: Angie Briggs & Sadie Carlson

February 20

Liturgist: Pyper Swanson

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Brooks Family

February 27

Liturgist: Abby Yoder

Children's Moment: Jack Silvis

Ushers: Kurt Jordan & Dave Lambin

Thank You Volunteers!

We are always looking for more Sunday morning volunteers. Please contact the church office if you can help out.

February Sunday School Schedule

Our 9AM Adult Sunday School will take a short break until February 26. On the 26th the class will begin the 6 week Lenten study, Seven Words, led by Pastor Karna.

See you then!



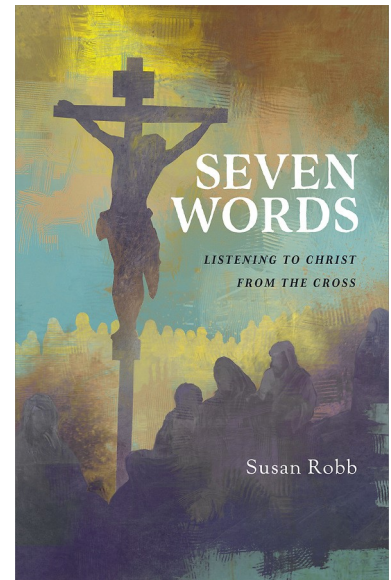
Lenten Bible Study

Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross

by Susan Robb

Sundays at 9AM

Pastor Karna will be leading this 6 week study during Lent. This study will be our adult Sunday School during this time. Please contact the church office or let Pastor Karna know if you would like to participate.



While many of us naturally wish to avoid the reality of the cross, it's from the cross that Jesus speaks and shows his deepest love for us. It's from the cross that Jesus' full humanity draws us closest to him. It's from the cross, as Jesus breathes his last breath and speaks his last words, that his deep trust in the Father and his divine glory are revealed. Those who listen to Jesus' last words from the cross will discover what he most wants them (the world) to hear and will experience an intimate and divine awe only available to those who are willing to draw near his cross.

In Seven Words, Susan Robb looks at the seven last words of Christ on the cross through a lens that finds life and hope in his final sayings, while exploring each from a biblical and historical perspective. The book brings a hopeful and contemplative take on the cross during the weeks of Lent.



Love never fails.

Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, February 22
11AM - 1PM



On Ash Wednesday Pastor Karna will be available for ashes and communion. Please stop in any time between 11 and 1.

AlWood Food Pantry Legion Meal



Monday, February 13
6-7PM
Meal: Potato Bar



Coat Donations Needed

Tim Oloffson of Another Child Foundation recently contacted Pastor Karna asking our church to help by donation new or gently used childrens and teen sized coats in February and March. Please search your closets or check the sale racks at the stores , if you are able, and drop off coats in the fellowship hall through the months of February and March.

Another Child Foundation does amazing work with children in need in Romania, Honduras, and Guatemala. You can find out more at anotherchildfoundation.org



February

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5 No Sunday School Confirmation Class after church	6 6:30PM Scouts	7	8 9:15AM Prayer Group	9	10	11
12 No Sunday School Confirmation Class after church	13 8-Noon Pre-K Screening 6:30PM Scouts	14 Group Happy Valentine's Day	15 9:15AM Prayer Group	16 1:00PM Backpacks	17	18
19 No Sunday School Confirmation Class after church	20 President's Day	21	22 9:15AM Prayer Group 11AM - 1PM Ash Wed. drop in service	23	24	25
26 9:00AM Lenten Study Confirmation Class after church	27 6:30PM Scouts Pastor out of office	28 Pastor out of office				

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Sunday Schedule:

9:00AM Adult Sunday School

9:30AM Coffee Hour

10:00AM Worship

Visit us online at alphaumc.org



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