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February 2020

And lastly, there could be **spiritual deficiency** in your life—a need for God, fellowship and experience of God’s presence in turbulent times. The psalmist was aware of himself when he wrote:

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, “Where is your God?” When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God.” (Ps.42:1-5)

I believe that in the journey of loneliness, we must recognize the feeling of loneliness and seek God’s grace and strength. In your loneliness, examine yourself, draw near to God, engage in positive social relationships with close friends, focus on the positive, and cherish that God has a will and plans for you. Longed for spiritual connection with the Almighty, get involved in a Bible-believing congregation, seek and volunteer for charitable organizations in the community, join support groups, sport teams or hobby clubs. Be confident of yourself, depend on God for daily strengths and graces; and in this process, God may lead you to seek professional help—through a good Christian counselor or friends. Remember, the more activities you have the more relief from loneliness you can experience. Meditate on the texts at the beginning of this article with the blessing of His spirit.

~~Pastor Dominic Tommy

GREETINGS TO ALL OCC SHOE BOX PARTICIPANTS,

Just a quick note to let you know that the Grand Rapids area total for 2019 is **30,956** shoe boxes which is more than last year. Thanks to each of you and your congregations for making it possible to share the Good News of Jesus with 30,956 children who have not heard the wonderful story of God’s Love for them. *(United States total was 8,950,144 and International was 10,569,405.)*

We heard the following story of how the simple gift of a shoe box changes the hearts of those blessed by the Love of God. A town in Libya had a Main Street and on one side was the Christian community and on the other was the Muslim community and they did not get along with each other. The Pastor was to receive shoe boxes. So he decided to get permission to close the street and to invite the Muslim kids to come to the distribution. The kids came together, played together, and this brought the community closer together. The Muslim Aman was so impressed he gave 2 acres of ground for the church to build a new church for the community. There really is no limit to what God can do when we serve Him with our whole hearts.

Blessings in Jesus to each of you this Christmas Season and thank you for sharing the Good News of Jesus through the simple gift of a shoe box filled with His Love. We will forward national and international numbers as they become available.

~~Rex and Karen Wambaugh

PASTORAL REFLECTION

Dear Friends:

Portraits of Loneliness

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.... “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand....to console and provide for those who mourn.”— (Psalm 42:5 Isaiah 41:10)

Between Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year I visited many shut-in friends and was touched by their expressions of loneliness, especially in the absence of their loved ones—far away, or gone home to glory. Let’s face it! Once in our lifetime we’ll experience moments or periods of loneliness. There is no scientific inoculation or immune system that can shut down symptoms of loneliness. They come through many channels and shapes. Why? Because life is full of difficult moments. It can hit us more intimately, very personal; and there is no exception as to class, gender, or age at this emotional state.

Loneliness can be developed over a period of time, especially when comfort and hope seem unattainable. In fact, life transition over time can be the “birthing egg” of loneliness—divorce, death of a spouse, separation in relationship, family matters, disappointment in career life, changes in health, financial crisis, isolation, and wrong prescriptions can contribute to loneliness. Many years ago, someone shed more light on this subject of loneliness:

“Americans are more socially isolated today than they were two decades ago, and a sharply growing number of people say they have no one in whom they can confide, according to a comprehensive new evaluation of the decline of social ties in the U.S.”

Mother Theresa once wrote, “The world’s greatest tragedy is unwantedness; the world’s greatest disease is loneliness”. C.S. Lewis wrote, “We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious, we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves”. “Human beings need both vertical intimacy (with God) and horizontal intimacy (with people) in order to be fulfilled. Without those relationships, they are vulnerable to a complex set of emotions described as loneliness.” (Miriam Stark Parent). “The soul hardly ever realizes it, but whether the person is a Christian or not, our loneliness is really a home-sickness.” (Hubert Van Zeller).

Managing Your Loneliness

If you experience loneliness, I suggest you prayerfully identify the root—your loneliness may be a result of **social influence**—that is, you may be caught up with social media, technology, television and urbanization that enhances your separation from family, social places like Church and social clubs which can promote friendship, fellowship and support for your well-being. Your loneliness could be a result of **developmental causes**—your parental influence in their need for love, bonding, and acceptance may play out in your life. Further areas to look into are **psychological tendencies** that may create loneliness—low self-esteem, inability to communicate, self-defeating attitudes, memories of abuse, hostility or fear. There are also what psychologists call **“situational loneliness.”** Sometimes people are lonely because of special circumstances which they find themselves in—being single or widowed, living alone, grieving for departed loved ones, elders living alone without family support, and even a difficult spouse can lead to depression—creating loneliness even though they are around in the home. We must watch out for these influences! (cont. on back page)

Central United Methodist Church is located in downtown Lake Odessa at 912 4th Avenue. Contact us at 616-374-8861; info@centralchurch-lakeo.org or pastor@centralchurch-lakeo.org. Check out our Facebook page for current activities, weekly dinner menu, and youth activities.

CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays	02/20	Sally Strater	
02/02	Dodie Denman	02/24	Barbara Wareing
02/05	Thelma Curtis	02/26	Blake Zona
02/06	Sam McNeill	02/27	Jonathan Freidhoff
02/09	Lori McNeill		
02/12	Margot Bailey	Anniversaries	
02/12	Frank Klein	02/14	Chuck & Leona Rayner—11 years

UPCOMING EVENTS

- FRESH FOOD DISTRIBUTION**
Tuesday, Feb. 4—2:00 pm (*Volunteers at 1:30.*)
- BLOOD DRIVE—Fellowship Hall**
Monday, Feb. 10—Noon to 5:45 pm
- FAT SUNDAY CELEBRATION— Fellowship Hall**
Sunday, Feb. 23—During coffee hour

COMMITTEE/OTHER MEETINGS:

- Missions Committee** - Mon., Feb. 10, 9 am
- Board of Trustees**—Tues., Feb. 11, 7 pm
- Respite Group** - Thur., Feb. 13 & 27, 1-4 pm
- Friendship Group** - Fri., Feb. 14 & 28, 12 pm
- Finance Committee** - Mon., Feb. 17, 6 pm

NEWS OF THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Please Note: All regular meeting times are held at 1:00 pm.

Next Meeting:
Feb. 10 Circle Meeting - Church Lounge
Hostess: Karen Avery
Program: Elaine Garlock, "A Call to Prayer & Self Denial."
Program books for 2020 will be available.
Questions? You can call (480-231-7785) or email Terri at catt3247@aol.com.
~~Terri Catt



UMW Volunteers preparing Christmas plates.

Recent Memorial Gifts

Your gifts to Central Church become a living tribute to honor a loved one or friend.

We praise the Lord for the lasting legacy provided by all donors:

- In Memory of Ed Reiser: \$210**
- In Memory of Dale Mossburg: \$525**
- In Memory of Lloyd Corston: \$1,155**

PRAYERS OF CONDOLENCE

Family of Julie Nelson	Harold Dennie's family
Family of Gerald Thome	Leroy Thomas' family
Family of Deane Durkee	Family of Marvin Smith
Family of Bert Voorhees	Family of Norm Caskey
Family of Vern Alderding	Family of Charlene Hines



FAT SUNDAY COFFEE HOUR – February 23rd

The Fellowship & Care Committee is planning a **special coffee hour** in celebration of this year's Fat Sunday celebration on February 23rd. Please bring a delicious dessert to share with everyone as we celebrate the last Sunday before Lent begins.

THANK YOU'S

- ◆ Thanks to our church family for all the donations and volunteer hours given to those in our community who needed a little extra loving care through the Christmas Basket program. And thanks, too, for all the prayer support. God's provision and care was certainly felt! ~~Kay Barcroft
- ◆ The Worship Committee wishes to thank all those who participated in taking down the Christmas decorations.
- ◆ Friends at Central Church, thank you very much for the generous gift at Christmas. I appreciate it and I appreciate all of you. ~~Mike McCartney.
- ◆ I would like to thank all of you for your prayers, your kind words, and all of the beautiful cards that were sent after losing my dad, Gerry Thome. Your show of support was overwhelming and very comforting. ~~Kim Stoeper
- ◆ A sincere "thank you" to family and friends who remembered me in their prayers, sent cards, came to visit and made phone calls during my recent hospital stay. Your thoughtfulness was much appreciated. May our heavenly Father bless each one of you! ~~Virginia Decker

VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED

Whether its nursery, greeters, ushers, Sunday morning counters, funeral luncheons, blood drives, coffee hour, or serving on a committee, there's always a way to help your church. Sunday morning coffee hour is the center of our weekly connectional life. Our prayer is that families and individuals will sign-up weekly to provide coffee and fellowship moments. Please consider all of these ministries here at Central.



State of the Church Report

Stats for December 2019

Average Attendance:	66
Operating Fund:	
<i>Receipts</i>	\$15,310.80
<i>Expenses</i>	\$13,600.05

Other Designated Giving:

Building Fund	\$ 460
Rentals	\$ 290
General Missions	\$ 213
Missionaries	\$ 35
LAMA Benevolence Fund	\$ 428
Advent Fund	\$ 165
Christmas Baskets	\$ 420
Memorial Fund	\$1,331
General Education Fund	\$ 35
Staff-Pastor Gifts	\$1,037

Upcoming Blood Drive

Our next Red Cross blood drive is scheduled for Monday, February 10, 12 to 5:45 pm



If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Marian Durkee at 616-374-7489.



Fresh Food Distribution Tuesday, February 4, at 2 p.m. Volunteers are encouraged and asked to arrive by 1:30.