

The Lily Pad

“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” Solomon 2:1



“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14,15).

Dear Friends in Christ in the 5th Ave. United Methodist Church,

Greetings to you in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Wisconsin Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church 2021 was held on June 18 & 19 2021. Annual Conference theme: Radical Inclusion Racial Justice

I was humbled and honored to represent you at this Annual Conference as we worked together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Annual Conference is so different when done virtually, and there is much I miss. Let me confess to you that I really miss not being together in person for annual conference. I miss the handshakes and the hugs. I miss laughing with laity and colleagues, singing, praying, and even helping to work through tough issues together.

At the same time, even meeting in this way, annual conference was still a means of grace, an impacting way to note religious time, religious space, religious belonging, religious structure, even religiosity itself. We, even online, conducted ourselves in a gracious, conferencing fashion as a religious community. Due to the wonders of technology, more people had the opportunity to share in some of the special moments of annual conference. That being said, I am very much looking forward to being together in person next year.

I attended the Executive Clergy Session, where we approved candidates for ministry, local pastors, those going on medical or family leave, and recognized those who were retiring. We also paused to give thanks for those among the clergy who have died this past year.

Bishop Hee Soo Jung and the Cabinet of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, during the Appointment Sessions, worked prayerfully together to appoint clergy to every church in our Annual Conference. Sadly, many local churches were left unappointed.

I give thanks for the ministry of 5th Ave. United Methodist Church and for being a servant leader among us. **It is my pleasure to announce that I have been reappointed to serve for another year!** Brother Martin and I sincerely and humbly ask for your prayers for us. I give thanks for the leadership of our staff-parish relations committee and the opportunity to serve alongside you for another year!



As I have worked tirelessly as a true and faithful leader during the trying times we've faced in 2020 and 2021, I give thanks for our 5th Ave. Staff, Accountable Leadership Board (ALB), Technology Team, Trustees, Custodian, Ushers, Decoration Team, Worship Team, Funeral and Events Team, our Partners in Ministry and especially the laity and friends of 5th Ave. UMC who have done a tremendous job ensuring that our church continues to be a functional and vital part of all of our lives.

Wonderful work of our church was accomplished during this crisis. Much of the work has been unseen, and if I were to list everything that has and continues to be done to keep our church actively connected and engaged, this newsletter would not be sufficient space. Please continue to keep each other in your prayers as we move to our new "normal".

I celebrate that we have arrived at an important turning point in our fight against the coronavirus and COVID-19 here in the United States. With increasing numbers of persons receiving vaccinations and the cooperation of so many to maintain mitigation measures while vaccines were being administered, case rates for COVID-19 are declining, as are hospitalizations and deaths. This is good news, and news we must hold together with the reality that this is a global pandemic and other parts of the world have not yet reached such a turning point.

We need to remember that *"this virus loves nothing more than to find a large group of unvaccinated, unmasked human beings among whom it can dance and hop from person to person and go wild"* (Dr. Nancy Kass). Most recently, we've witnessed the devastation wrought by the coronavirus pandemic in India. A heartfelt "thank you" for your support of our schools in India; your financial contributions made an impactful difference. Here at home, your backing of "A Place to Grow" will ensure children in Milwaukee will have an opportunity for a fun and creative summer!

Yet here in the U.S., we've arrived at a new place. The CDC has issued new guidelines stating that fully vaccinated people can safely interact with others both indoors and outdoors without wearing masks. Hallelujah! What a blessing to see each other face to face without a mask. If you have not yet been vaccinated, get vaccinated. The guidance for engaging with others without masks is only for those who have been fully vaccinated. Let us encourage others to get vaccinated. Help others find vaccinations and locate transportation to receive them.

We will continue with live streaming our services. You can continue to watch them on our YouTube channel as well.

In the meantime, we are aggressively moving towards a second worship service. What, when, where, and why are questions that we would like for you to help us discern. Enclosed is a short survey to provide your input, questions and concerns. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it promptly.

Finally, let me again encourage deep patience among us. As our church leaders make plans and decisions, know we are doing our best to further the church's ministry while caring for others in love. Your viewpoint may not always win the day, and when it doesn't, please be gracious. Wouldn't it be awful to arrive at the other side of our nation's copious disharmonies when we can open our building and ministries freely and fully with less concern for the coronavirus, only to find that the church community to which we wanted to return and into which we wanted to welcome others has been significantly diminished because of conflict over decisions made, decisions only intended to reflect love and care?

I encouraged each of us to focus on **COMMUNICATION**. We are, after all, communicators of the gospel, and we communicate that good news in various ways: through text, Facebook, emails, newsletters like this one, letters, verbally, preaching and teaching, and how we live our lives in community. I urge each of us to think about what message our lives together communicates.

I remain truthfully and humbly grateful for the thoughtful and careful ways you have made decisions about ministry during this pandemic. I appreciate your ongoing desire to act in the interest of public health, the common good, and the well-being of others, all in the spirit of Jesus. Thank you and thanks be to God, who, in Jesus Christ, has been our companion along the way.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ, our Living Savior, we give you thanks for our church. It is a gift of grace to us. We are deeply grateful for the leadership of **Rev. Clarissa Martinelli** who has served us as pastor, teacher, leader, and friend in Christ. May your grace be upon her and her family in the spiritual adventure that lies ahead. As she continues as our pastor, we pray for her. May your grace abound in her life, giving peace, joy, and confidence in this continuing journey. May we remember to lift up the churches and pastors throughout Wisconsin that share this time with us. Empower us to fulfill your mission of making disciples as we serve you. **AMEN!**

I give thanks to God for you, and pray that He will continue to do a good work in you.

In ministry together,

PASTOR CLARISSA & BROTHER MARTIN

*You and I are called to be Easter people in service to this world—
Easter gives us a purpose in this life.*

We are to be the hands, voice, feet and heart of the Living Christ.

