

The Messenger



Pastor's Pondering

As we look toward February, my thoughts move toward Lent. Ash Wednesday is February 22, and I again invite those who wish to join with me in a day of fasting and prayer. It has been my practice throughout my ministry to fast from sun up to sundown on Ash Wednesday. In addition, I will be available in the sanctuary from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. for anyone to come and share. We will celebrate communion and receive imposition of ashes. It is a come and go time throughout the day. At 5:30 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, our weekly meal will still be offered. It should be an excellent way to begin the Lenten Season.

Lent is a season for introspection, quieting ourselves, and listening even more intently and intentionally for God's still, small voice. It is a time to look for and confess sin within our lives. A classic definition of sin is "to turn in on oneself." In other words, a self-centered focus is a primary characteristic of sin.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in chapter 15 of Romans that *"Jesus did not live to please Himself . . ."* Matthew and Mark remind us that *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and give His life as a ransom for many."* As Christians, the risen Christ is to be continuing His life—the life that the gospels and Paul describe above—in and through us.

The difficulty is our desire for permanence. We want to be remembered. So many in a world (and even some within the Church) seek to fulfill this desire rather than follow Jesus. Part of our fallen nature involves this striving to elevate the self so as to not be forgotten.

Beginning Sunday, February 5th and going through Easter, we will be in a series entitled "The Q Files." Qoheleth (*pronounced 'ko-leth*) is the author of Ecclesiastes. It is a very different book, and almost didn't make it into the Hebrew Bible (*Old Testament*). The more liberal Jewish faction thought it should be a part, but the more conservative Jewish faction did not. Qoheleth (or 'Q') has sought to explore life to the fullest in hopes of discovering life's meaning or purpose.

Throughout Lent we will be exploring various pathways people travel in hopes of finding permanence: pleasure, work, control, self-esteem, wisdom, and ownership. Q runs each of these potential pathways of life to the ultimate end and reports back to us in the Book of Ecclesiastes. My prayer that is that Q will be a gift from God to hear His still small voice and continue our transformation from self-focus to following Jesus in this Lenten Season and beyond.

--Pastor Renner

United Methodist Women

January was a fairly quiet time for the UMW and the weather was really very warm. So far we have had very little snow and Easter is a couple of weeks earlier this year, maybe spring will be early. Our first General meeting this year is February 1st. We will have a Guest Speaker -Kathy Hawbaker.

Kathy is going to talk to us about the Titus Manor Nursing Home of which she is the Director. If any church members are interested we welcome you to join our meeting Wednesday February 1st at 1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Tuesday February 21st Mary Circle will be hosting a Lenten Coffee from 3:30 to 5:30 pm .

GENERAL MEETING

February 1st 1:00 pm

Fellowship Hall

Speaker - Kathy Hawbaker

Hostess: Fern Patton and Virginia Darnell

Mary Circle

Tuesday February 21st

Lenten Coffee in Fellowship Hall

From 3:30 to 5:30 pm

All church members welcome

Enjoy the refreshment and visit with other church members.

Martha Circle:

Monday February 20th 7:00 p.m.

Hostess: Lola Horn 415 E. Jackson St.

co-Hostess: Jennifer Love

Devotions: Joan Highland

Lesson: Susan Connor

**REMEMBER TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14
IS VALENTINE'S DAY**



On Wednesday, February 22,

from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.,

You are invited to come, pray, meditate,
speak with Pastor Renner,
receive communion
and the imposition of ashes.



Becoming More Than a Good Bible Study Girl



Lysa knows what it's like to consider God as just another thing on her to-do list. For years she went through the motions of a Christian life: Go to church. Pray. Be nice. Longing for a deeper connection between what she knew in her head and her everyday reality, she wanted to personally experience God's presence.

Drawing from her own remarkable story of step-by-step faith, Lysa invites you to uncover the spiritually exciting life we all yearn for. With her trademark wit and spiritual wisdom, Lysa will help you:

- Replace doubt, regret, and envy with truth, confidence and praise.
- Discover how to have inner peace and security in any situation
- Sense God responding to your prayers
- Stop the unhealthy cycles of striving and truly learn to love who you are and what you've been given.
- Learn how to make a Bible passage come alive in your own devotion time.

WHEN: Wednesdays Feb. 22, 29 & Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28 from 6 – 7

WHERE: Sullivan First United Methodist Church

COST: \$5 for participant's book

Please sign-up in the office or contact Lyn Renner by Sunday, February 12th.



The Yellow Bucket for February will go for Church camp scholarships.

In January, \$200 was given to support the Sullivan Ministerial Association. Of that, \$64.40 was collected in the Yellow bucket offering.

Church Finances

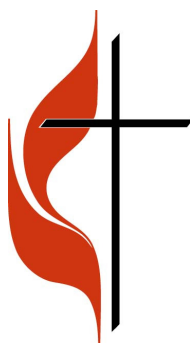
December receipts: \$22,021.84

December Disbursements: \$22,628.56

Campus Balance: \$470.00

Mortgage Balance: \$93,496.64

*The deadline for the March Newsletter is
Wednesday, February 15.*



First United Methodist Church

216 W. Jefferson St.
Sullivan, IL 61951
Phone: (217) 728-4436
E-mail: jesusfirst33@hotmail.com
www.sullivanfirstumc.com

Office Hours
Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Visit us on the web:
www.sullivanfirstumc.com**