

UMCWFB

CONNECT. GROW. SERVE.



A MEANS OF GRACE CONFERENCE

FAITH IN ACTION

MISSIONS REFLECTIONS

MAY 2026

WWW.UMCWFB.ORG

Table of Contents

819 E. Silver Spring Dr.
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217

www.umcwf.org

© 2026 United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay

The Table

Reflection from the Pastor 03

Faith In Action

New Member Welcome 05

Faith, Food, Friendship 05

United Women in Faith 06

Habitat for Humanity 06

MacCanon Brown Build Day 07

Immigration MKE 08

Notes from the Board 08

Growing Hearts

Voices of Youth 09

Missions

Mosaic Covenant 10

Mission Reflection 11

A Look Ahead

May Birthdays 12

Means of Grace 13





A Reflection From The Pastor

Beloved Church,

There is a quiet weight many of us carry.

Full schedules. Constant demands. A sense that life keeps moving faster, even when we long to slow down. Over time, that pace can begin to feel like a kind of darkness—not always dramatic, but steady and draining. And yet, into that darkness, God speaks a different word: Rest.

Sabbath is not simply about stopping—it is about making space for light. When we pause, even briefly, we allow God’s presence to break through the noise and busyness that can cloud our lives. Sabbath becomes a holy interruption—a moment where light enters places we didn’t even realize had grown dim. Jesus understood this deeply.

31 Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. [Jesus] said to the apostles, “Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for awhile.” 32 They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place. (Mark 6:31- 32, CEB)

Even as the needs around him were urgent and unending, he called to his followers to step away. He withdrew to quiet places. He prayed. He rested in God. In doing so, he reminds us that we cannot carry light into the world if we are not first willing to receive it.

Sabbath is how we receive that light. It doesn’t have to be complicated. It begins with simple, intentional choices:

- Stepping away from constant activity, even for a short time
- Creating quiet space for prayer or reflection
- Turning off distractions to become fully present
- Choosing connection with God and others over productivity
- Parents with young children may simply pause in the car, invite everyone to take a deep breath, give thanks, and ask God to guide us to live faithfully

These moments may seem small, but they matter. They are the places where God gently meets us—restoring, renewing, and guiding us back toward what is life-giving.

I am excited to invite you to a Sabbath rest and worship service on Sunday, May 31, where we will gather for one worship service at 10:00 AM.

Together, we will reflect on a question many of us carry:
When life feels heavy, what brings us out of the darkness and into light?

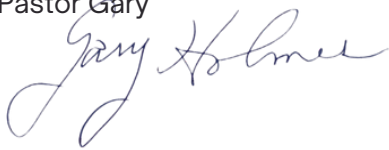
In this service, we will explore how our Christian faith, family, friendship, and music lift us into places of joy and peace.

Our Chancel Choir and orchestra will share *Illuminare*, a stunning work by Elaine Hagenberg. Through music, prayer, and message, this service will affirm your resilience and awaken a hope that cannot be extinguished. I so look forward to having our church family together for one service.

In a world that often feels overwhelming,
Sabbath becomes more than rest—
It becomes light.
Light that steadies us.
Light that restores us.
Light that reminds us we are not alone.

May you find moments this month
to pause...
to breathe...
and to let God's light shine into every place that feels weary.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Gary



Illumination

As we experience challenges in life, what lifts us from the depths of despair to a place of joy and peace? On **May 31st at 10:00am**, we will consider how our Christian faith, family, friendship, and music bring us out of the darkness and into the light.

The Chancel Choir and orchestra will sing Elaine Hagenberg's new piece, *Illuminare*. Along with this beautiful music, the prayers, and sermon will affirm your resilience and inspire an inextinguishable hope in your heart.

Sunday May 31st 10am
Combined Worship



New Member Welcome

In April, we welcomed new members to our faith community:

Renee Ferrara, former member and staff at UMCWFB has returned. **Christopher** and **Stephanie Elizer** with baby **Ruby**, who was also baptized.

We are grateful that these people have chosen to make a covenant vow to be a member of UMCWFB. Please introduce yourself to them, and make them feel welcome!

Our next New Member Welcome Ceremony will take place on May 31st at 10:00am. Please reach out to [Jenny Fisher](#) to learn more about membership at UMCWFB.

Faith, Food, & Friendship Celebration

Our weekly faith-focused community meal and outreach program concluded for the season on April 15th with a night of worship led by our youth choirs! The children and youth sang praise songs, and music from the Children’s Musical, God Squad. We also heard a special message from Kristal Melbye, Director of Youth and Family Ministry, about the importance of leading a faith-focused life.

Our weekly attendance for Faith, Food, and Friendship averaged 80-90 people from September through mid-April. We had three youth choirs, youth group, more than a dozen different faith focused class offerings and Bible studies and KICKStart (Faith-based programming for kids). Chef Gretchen Kniffin prepared delicious meals week after week supported by an amazing volunteer team led by Tom Van Cleave. Chef Gretchen offers catering services to the community and can be reached [here](#).

Huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped with meal prep, serving and clean-up! We couldn’t have done it without you!

Wednesday Night Faith, Food, and Friendship will resume in September. For questions about FFF or to provide feedback, please contact [Jenny Fisher](#).



United Women in Faith



Rachel Circle Crime Prevention

A crime prevention presentation hosted by United Women in Faith, the Rachel Circle, and coordinated by Patty Vanden Plas offered attendees practical tools and confidence to better recognize and avoid fraud and scams.

Whitefish Bay Police Department Detective Hryniewicki shared guidance on staying safe at home and in everyday situations. “It’s important to recognize when something feels off,” he noted. “Trust your instincts—don’t ignore that feeling.”

Holy Socks Project

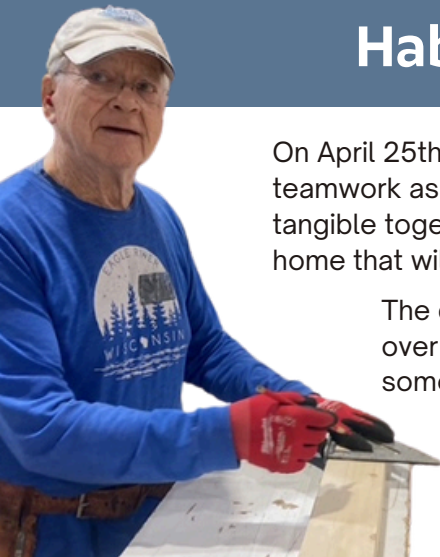
“Thank you to everyone who recycled socks as part of the Wisconsin United Women of Faith Holy Socks Project,” says Mary Mueller.



Mary led the initiative at our church. “For the past two years, our church and many other UMC churches in Wisconsin participated in this project, made possible through a partnership with TerraCycle and Gold Toe Socks”

Northcott Neighborhood House was selected as Wisconsin’s beneficiary, receiving \$1 for every pound of socks collected for recycling. By the end of October 2025, more than 5,400 pounds of socks had been diverted from landfills, generating \$5,458 in support of their work.

Habitat for Humanity



On April 25th, the Habitat for Humanity warehouse in Riverwest filled with the rhythm of teamwork as 16 volunteers from Missions and Men’s Ministry gathered to build something tangible together. Across two shifts, walls took shape, 42 in total, each one part of a future home that will soon welcome a family.

The day was filled with learning new skills, working side by side, and sharing stories over a simple pizza lunch with Habitat staff. What began as stacks of lumber became something meaningful by day’s end.

Habitat builds are open to anyone 16 and older, with guidance every step of the way. No experience needed, just a willingness to be part of the work. To learn more or join a future build, contact [Don Lybeck](#) or [Tom Groble](#).



MacCanon Brown Work Day



What a meaningful day of service and connection at MacCanon Brown!

With more than twenty volunteers, youth and adults working side by side, we accomplished an incredible amount of work in just several hours. Teams assembled multiple new garden beds, while others removed older beds that were no longer usable, and then we replaced the old beds with sturdy new ones that will serve the community well.



What stood out most wasn't just the productivity, but the spirit behind it. Everyone showed up ready to work, support one another, and make a difference. It was a powerful reminder that service is not only about what we accomplish, but also about the relationships we build along the way.

We are deeply grateful to all who participated and to the parents who helped make the day possible through rides and support. The energy, teamwork, and heart for serving others were truly inspiring.



Carpenter's Shop



For more information:
 Tom Van Cleave
tvancleave@ameritech.net
 Kari Nau at karinau010@gmail.com

Moving Help Needed: Friday May 15th and Saturday May 16th

As we begin the 3 month renovation project for Carpenter's Shop, we are in need of help moving classrooms. Please consider volunteering your time to help!

Moving help sign up here:
[**VOLUNTEER**](#)



Justice Team: Immigration in MKE



Organized by the Justice team, our church hosted “Immigration in MKE: What You Need to Know Right Now” on April 16th.

The evening featured a wide-ranging discussion and Q&A on current immigration issues, with insights from leaders at Milwaukee Turners, Voces de la Frontera, and Forward Latino, along with an officer from the Milwaukee Police Department, a Shorewood trustee, and a County Supervisor. The event also created space for connection, with refreshments, information tables, and conversation before and after the program. Approximately 200 people from our church and the broader Milwaukee community attended.

A recording of the event is available on our church’s YouTube page.

In addition, our church is hosting a food and hygiene drive for immigrants throughout April and May.



Notes From the Board

Key Takeaways from the Servant Leadership Board’s April Meeting:

To open the April SLB meeting, Tom Van Cleve led a devotional centered on thankfulness and gratitude, grounded in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. The reflection focused on a clear calling: as leaders in the church, we are invited not only to guide, but to model gratitude. Practicing thankfulness—even in challenge—aligns us with God’s will and reflects the light of Christ to those we lead.

The board also continued discussion around Areas of Focus for 2026 within the Spiritual Pathway model, including a life of service, a life of generosity, and visioning. The Congregational Development Team has begun reaching out to potential candidates, with two individuals already expressing interest in serving on a ministry or committee. If you feel called to serve, please reach out to Pastor Gary Holmes.

We also recognize and celebrate the contributions of Hui Zhang and Jeff McClellan as they complete their terms on the board. Their leadership and service have been deeply appreciated.

Full Meeting Minutes are available from **Tom Van Cleve**.



Parents Night Out

We had such a wonderful time at our Parents' Night Out on Friday, April 24! It was a joy to welcome so many children for an evening full of fun, laughter, and connection.

Our youth did an incredible job leading the night. They planned and led creative activities and high-energy games, where the kids could enjoy themselves and connect with each other and them. We are so proud of the way our youth stepped up with responsibility, leadership, and care; they were a blessing to every child who attended.

Meanwhile, parents were able to enjoy a well-deserved evening out, knowing their children were in good hands.

Thank you to all the families who participated and helped make the night such a success. All proceeds will support this summer's Appalachia Service Project trip.

We are grateful for a community that shows up for one another in such meaningful ways!



Voices of Youth



UMCWFB Missions Team: Building a Mosaic of Support



The Missions team at UMCWFB has always been dedicated to supporting the needs of various agencies—local, national, and international—that work tirelessly to improve the lives of people everywhere. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that collective action can make a meaningful difference in the world.



Guidance from the Wisconsin Conference

In alignment with the guidance of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church, UMCWFB is joining fellow churches across the conference. Together, we are creating a beautiful mosaic of mission support, a unified effort that transforms lives and makes a positive impact on the global community.

Monthly Focus: The Mosaic Color Bands

Each month, our missions team will highlight a different color band that forms part of this mosaic. By focusing on these distinct areas, we aim to encourage everyone in our congregation to deepen their engagement with missions and contribute to the ongoing work of improving lives.

Through this approach, our hope is to inspire growth in mission involvement for all, fostering a spirit of unity and compassion within our church and beyond.

Obtaining the Orange Color Band

In May, we will promote “Peace with Justice” Special Sunday, celebrated on Sunday, May 31. This effort will also earn the orange mosaic piece. Loose change and designated donations collected throughout the month will be directed to the General Conference.

Why “Peace with Justice”? This initiative supports ministries and causes working toward peace and fairness around the world. Through these offerings, the church raises its voice in response to violence and inequality.

Additional details will be shared throughout May in the Weekly Connection.

Paint This Church

A UMCWFB mission trip reflection

That week in July in southern Oklahoma it was over 100 degrees. Every day. We left Whitefish Bay early Saturday morning in a dozen or so 14- passenger vans, plus a tool van, and a car pulling a trailer with a complete kitchen for Leona. Our caravan of decorated vans with CBs plugged in headed to an Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) campground in Ardmore. It was maybe one of the more ambitious youth mission trips this church sponsored. And one that we were least prepared for.



We arrived late Sunday afternoon. For reasons that aren't important, we couldn't stay in the cabins. So to sleep 60 some youth and 25 adults, we turned the camp's chapel and fellowship hall into makeshift dorms. No need to trouble you with a description of the showers and toilets. We gathered together early Monday morning by work teams. The sun already beating down and the air thick enough to wear. Jeffry Bross, UMCWFB youth pastor at the time, assigned the jobs. We stood by the church building where the local Native American congregation worshipped. The building walls were graying and peeling.

Waving his arms in a sweeping arc he said "paint this church" to me and my team. I looked at the teens in my group. They looked back at me. There were no brushes. No paint. No scrapers. Now what? Other groups headed off to their jobs for the week, refurbishing buildings, roofing, repairing, even sent one team an hour north to help frame a church. We did paint that church. Though I bet that paint job didn't last for more than a couple of years. But painting the church wasn't the point. We were there in Ardmore, Oklahoma to show up for the people who lived and worshiped in that town. We were there to connect with them and each other. We were in Oklahoma in July in 100-degree heat because for some reason God wanted us there.

Looking back on that trip a few decades later, it provided what every mission trip provides, beyond the work and fun stories. It's an opportunity to enjoy a small adventure. To be part of a community outside of your comfort zone. And to experience deeper relationships with each other and God.

-Jeff McClellan



Interested in going on a mission trip?

We are still looking for one additional adult leader to join us for our Appalachia Service Project trip this summer. Adult leaders play an essential role in supporting our youth, helping ensure a safe and meaningful experience, and building relationships that last long after the trip is over.

This trip provides an opportunity to serve families in need while growing in faith and community together. Leaders do not need construction experience — just a willingness to support youth and be part of the team.

Interested? Contact Kristal Melbye for details on how to be a part of the opportunity!



A MEANS OF GRACE: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PRAYER WORKSHOP

What to expect:

- Practical guidance on Spirit-led prayer
- Space to listen, reflect, and grow
- Invitation to serve on the church's Prayer Team
- Encouragement for your personal prayer life

Get involved:

Those who feel led will have the opportunity to join a Prayer Team supporting the ongoing prayer ministry of the church.

Please let Pastor Gary know if you are interested.

Come and experience the grace, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

Learn to Pray in the Power of the Spirit

Join us for a meaningful evening of learning, reflection, and practice as we explore how to pray with openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Whether you are new to prayer or seeking to go deeper, all are welcome.

DATE & LOCATION:

Wednesday May 13th, 2026

6:00-7:30pm

UMCWFB Chapel

Please pre-register
by scanning here:



TRAINERS:

John Peters & Kristin Breuss

St. Mary's Anglican Church, London

May Birthday Wishes

1st - Jean Bauman, Darren Miller, Kent Lowry

2nd - Roy Wagner, Frank Kotecki, Fiona Sook, Hayes

Montague, Ally Bubb

3rd - Jim Greer, Meggan Veierstahler

4th - Alex Miller

5th - Neffie Moore

6th - Cal Curran

7th - Bill Aeschbacher

8th - Brendon Gorham

9th - Vicki Abad, Erin Boehm, Katrina Wawrzyn

10th - Elle Henley, Ryan Miller, Katy Zhang

11th - Jim Schacht

12th - Trace Goudreau, David Hejn

13th - Sherry Lundell, Sam Swartzberg

14th - Miles Toll, Benjamin David Milia

15th - Ella Curran

16th - John Curran, Danny Donovan, Harvey Clark

Montague, Elena Teskey

20th - Valerie Jablonka

22nd - Dennis Han, Paul Schluter, Dick Griepentrog

23rd - Brent Erickson, Will Knab

24th - Guy Temple

27th - Zaniyah Freeman

28th - Nicholas Hatch

30th - Tom Daughtery, Janet Hartzell, Ben Knab

31st - Wendy Spinelli, Josephine Feix

A MEANS OF GRACE: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Conference

Are you seeking a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Through biblical insights and reflections on the life and ministry of Jesus, we will explore how the Spirit works in and through us to accomplish God's purposes.

Come prepared to be renewed, inspired, stretched, and empowered.

EVENT SPEAKERS



JOHN PETERS

John Peters, author of the book, *Third Person*, is Rector and gifted preacher of St. Mary, Bryanston Square, an Anglican church in central London. St Mary's has planted several churches in the UK and abroad. He may not be John Wesley, but he does have a wonderful English accent!



KRISTIN BREUSS

Kristin Breuss, Associate Vicar of St. Mary's London, is a gifted speaker and teacher. She is also the daughter of a long-time member of the UMCWFB, and groups look forward to her inspirational leadership when she visits from London.

DATE & LOCATION:

Saturday May 16th, 2026

UMCWFB

10:30-11am: Arrive

11am: Session 1 Worship & Talk

11:45/50am: Break

12pm: Session 2 or Seminars

1pm: Lunch

2pm: Session 3 - Worship, Talk, Ministry

3:30pm: Close

Sunday May 17th, 2026

UMCWFB

John Peters & Kristin Breuss will join us and speak during Sunday Worship.

9am - Contemporary

10:30am - Traditional

TO REGISTER:



There is no cost to participate, but please pre-register for planning purposes.

All are welcome.



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
of Whitefish Bay

*Becoming a Beloved Community by
Connecting, Growing, and Serving*

WWW.UMCWFB.ORG