

UMCWFB

CONNECT. GROW. SERVE.



CAMP LUCERNE

KEEPING OUR IDENTITY RELEVANT

FAITH IN ACTION

JULY 2026

WWW.UMCWFB.ORG

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A Reflection From The Pastor

Church Family,

This summer, our nation finds itself celebrating two remarkable moments. America marks 250 years since its founding, and our country has the privilege of hosting the FIFA World Cup, welcoming teams and fans from every corner of the globe.

Anniversaries and celebrations invite us to look back with gratitude and forward with hope. As Christians, they also invite us to ask an important question: **What kind of nation are we becoming?**

Our faith reminds us that the strength of a nation is not found merely in its military, economy, or achievements. It is found in the character of its people—in our willingness to love our neighbors, seek justice, and welcome the stranger.

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly calls God's people to practice hospitality. In Leviticus we are told, "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34). Jesus himself expanded our understanding of neighbor, teaching that compassion crosses every boundary of nationality, race, language, and culture.

When Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan—a story that reminds us that being a neighbor is less about proximity and more about compassion. Remember that this question was initiated by a question about what a person must do to be saved.

The World Cup offers us a living parable. Millions of people from different nations, languages, and cultures will gather in our country. They will bring their songs, traditions, foods, and stories. Instead of meeting these differences with suspicion, we can approach them with curiosity and discover them as gifts that enrich our common life.

What if we took time to learn about the countries represented in the tournament? What if we prayed for the players and fans traveling far from home? What if we explored the customs, histories, and cultures of people we may never otherwise meet? What if we saw this global celebration as an opportunity to practice Christ-centered hospitality?

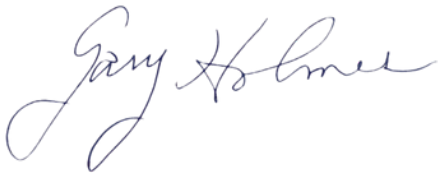
The Kingdom of God has always been bigger than any one nation. The vision in Revelation is of "every nation, tribe, people and language" gathered before God's throne in worship. Diversity is not a problem to be solved; it is part of God's beautiful design.

As we celebrate 250 years of our nation, perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can offer is a renewed commitment to being a people who welcome others with grace and curiosity. Hospitality is not simply opening our doors; it is opening our hearts.

At United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay, we seek to become Beloved Community by connecting, growing, and serving. In these historic moments, may we remember that every person we meet—whether from across the street or across the ocean—is our neighbor.

May we celebrate our nation's birthday with gratitude. May we enjoy the excitement of the World Cup with joy. And may we welcome the world as Jesus welcomed us—with generous hearts, open hands, and the love of Christ.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Gary




Baptism of Baby Ellie in June

Our faith community celebrated the baptism of Ellie Olbrich (daughter of Nicole and Nathaniel Olbrich, new members of our church) on June 14th. Please make sure to welcome baby Ellie and her parents to our faith community!

New Member Welcome

In the Spring, we welcomed many new members into our faith community. Please make sure to introduce yourself when you see them in worship. We are thrilled to report that since 2021, we have welcomed 126 new members into our growing, thriving faith community! Our next New Member Information Sessions will take place in the Fall. Please contact Jenny Fisher (JFisher@umcwfb.org) if you are interested in learning more about becoming a member of UMCWFB.

Cheryl Maloney
Renee Ferrara
Penny Kuczynski
Rita Nelson
Nicole and Nathaniel Olbrich (+ baby Ellie)
Stephanie and Chris Elizer (+ baby Ruby)
Brisa & Ashley VanGalen (+ Dean)
Anthony & Elizabeth Gibson (+ Hudson)

The ongoing journey to keep our identity relevant.

We've been known as The United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay for many, many years. We're examining the relevance of our identity. Does our current name reflect the current reality of what people are looking for in a faith community, beyond a specific denomination?

Our church has navigated change before, including changes in name, as part of remaining faithful, relevant, and vital in different seasons of ministry. The church was founded in 1902 and met in the "Little White Church." In 1942, it changed its name to Community Methodist Church. The name was changed again when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968, forming the United Methodist Church.

Our current vision is to build a Beloved Community that is caring, authentic and welcoming to all. A place where people can Connect with God and others. Where they can Grow in grace and community. Where they can Serve in ministry and mission.

Looking at our church's name is not a break from who we've been. It's part of an ongoing journey of discernment— how God has continually shaped this community to meet the needs of the time while staying rooted in our core identity and mission.

As we seek to reach people who may not have a church home, we want our name to communicate hospitality, community, and faith while remaining proudly rooted in the United Methodist tradition. No matter what name we're known by we'll continue to be a United Methodist Church, continuing to align ourselves with our denomination's vision to "form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously."

Below are the four names, along with some pluses and minuses of each, that have emerged through our months of prayer, conversation, and discernment. Over the coming weeks, the naming committee will continue its work and make a final recommendation, with the goal of introducing our new name this fall. We are grateful to everyone who has shared ideas, questions, and encouragement throughout this process. As always, if you have questions, you're welcome to speak with Pastor Gary, Jenny Fisher, or Jeff McClellan. Following the committee's final discernment, we anticipate introducing our new name this fall. Remember a name either explains you or invites people into something.

The strongest churches tend to do both.

Grace Harbor

A United Methodist Church

- + Deep theological richness (grace)
- + Strong emotional/spiritual imagery (harbor = refuge, safety)
- + Speaks directly to people who are hurting or searching
- Loses immediate geographic identity
- May require explanation at first

Bay Faith

A United Methodist Church

- + Combines place + belief
- + Simpler, more modern structure
- Less depth - doesn't clearly communicate experience or values

Can feel more like a brand name than a mission statement.

Bay Community

A United Methodist Church

- + Strong connection to Beloved Community
- + Emphasizes relationship, belonging, connection
- + Less about institution, more about people
- "Community" can feel vague if not backed by lived experience

This fits very naturally with our vision:
Connecting, Growing, Serving → Becoming Beloved Community

Faith Community

A United Methodist Church

- + Centers on shared belief and spiritual identity
- + Theologically safe
- Slightly more inward-facing than "Bay Community"
- Highly generic and less compelling for younger generations



Camp Lucerne

A Light in the Darkness



We had a wonderful time at Camp Lucerne in the middle of June. We had 45 youth campers and almost 20 adult volunteers. We enjoyed campfires, swimming, canoeing, games, art and crafts, worship, Bible study and lots more! We enjoyed beautiful weather, and grew in faith and friendships. Our camp theme was “Light in the Darkness”, based on the Bible verse “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12).

The campers learned the value of looking to Jesus and relying on faith during difficult times. We are grateful to all of the volunteers who came to help at camp. We are also grateful to the UMCWFB Foundation and United Women in Faith for financial support to keep camp affordable for our community families. We are also grateful to everyone who donated snacks and supplies for camp! We look forward to our next Camp Lucerne experience June 13-16, 2027!





United Women in Faith welcome all to small group "Circles"

Circles are the small groups of our church's United Women in Faith (UWF) organization. They are designed to bring people together to enjoy fellowship and special interests. Circles are open to all, and eagerly welcome new members.



How members participate in each Circle is outlined below. Loretto Steinmetz, UWF outreach coordinator, would love to connect you with a Circle leader. Email her at ldsteinmetz@wi.rr.com or phone (414) 550-2957.

Claudia Circle:

Lovingly craft quilts and other projects to support local missions projects and the Holiday Fair.

Deborah Circle:

Gather each month to discuss a new book, along with a dessert themed to the book title.

Esther Circle:

Build relationships together as Christian mothers, strengthen members' faith and serve church and community.

Eve's Garden Circle:

Join together to serve God by enhancing the church's gardens and grounds during gardening season.

Hannah Circle:

Create jams and jellies as well as other items that are "must buy" items at the Holiday Fair.

Knitting Circle:

Learn from each other and make items such as hats, scarves and mittens for those in the community.

Rachel Circle:

Work on items for the Holiday Fair, provide Baptism roses, contribute food for meal programs.

Women at the Well:

Support each other through devotions and discussions, and engage in mission projects together.

Thank you to everyone for creating wonderful memories at Camp Lucerne this year!



United Women in Faith announce yearly contributions

UWF ended the fiscal year in June and announced \$23,964 in mission contributions to these organizations & programs:

“All of this was possible through the immense and faithful generosity and commitment by UWF members, as well as church members support of UWF fundraisers. Those fundraisers are the Holiday Fair, Poinsettia Sales, Souper Bowl and Spring Plant Sale,” said Lori Aeschbacher, 2025-2026 president of the group.

“UWF women also are involved in service that cannot be measured in dollars,” Lori continued. “For example, they knit hats and scarves for Marvin Pratt Elementary students; sew quilts of various sizes for community living facilities (66 donated just this year alone); acquire and distribute food, toiletries, and gifts to those lacking resources; and tend to the church gardens. UWF women of our church strive to live out the global UWF vision to turn faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.”

ASP Youth Mission Trip: \$1,800
Camp Lucerne Scholarships: \$1,300
Claudia Circle Quilt Ministry: \$300
Courage+ for LGBTQ Youth: \$1,500
Feed My Starving Children: \$1,000
Habitat for Humanity: \$700
Hunger Task Force: \$387
MacCanon Brown: \$1,600
Homeless Sanctuary
Midwest Missions Packing Event: \$1,200
Milwaukee Rescue Mission: \$270
Joy House
Northcott Neighborhood House: \$2,000
Rooted & Rising: \$1,600
Washington Park
Southeast District UWF: \$5,260
Pledge to Mission & other local, national & international giving
Star Legacy Foundation \$308
UMCWFB Mission at Home: \$371
Kitchen tablecloths & carafes
UMCWFB Mission at Home: \$2,868
Walnut Room shades
UMCWFB Meal Programs: \$1,500



Youth Summer Programming

Even though Sunday School is taking a summer break, youth ministry activities will continue throughout the summer! We've got a great mix of fellowship, service, and fun planned, and we'd love for students to join us whenever they can. All events are open to students entering 6th grade through college.



OUR SUMMER SCHEDULE INCLUDES:

July 9th – Schultz Pool Meet Up 11:00am

August 6th – Chinooks Game at 6:35pm

August 9th – Serve With Us: Azura Assisted Living 2:00–3:00pm

August 20th – Klode Beach Party 3:00–5:00pm

August 25th – Serve With Us: Hunger Task Force 1:00pm



Letters From Home

On July 18th, 19 youth and adults will head to Buchanan County, VA to work on homes as part of Appalachia Service Project. It is a tradition that family members, friends, and members of our church community write letters to those who are on ASP. We give the letters to participants midweek as it's a great time to receive some love from home. These letters are always so appreciated by everyone!

Please consider writing letters for those on ASP. Letters can be dropped off at church in Kristal Melbye's mailbox by Thursday, July 16th. If you want a list of those going, please email Kristal at kmelbye@umcwf.org.

Youth Ministries Update

One of the biggest highlights of the summer will be our ASP Mission Trip, July 18–25. Our youth and adult leaders will spend the week serving others through home repair ministry, building relationships, and sharing Christ's love in practical ways. We appreciate your prayers for safe travels, meaningful experiences, and hearts ready to serve.

Looking towards fall, we are excited to restart Youth Sunday School, Wednesday Night Youth Group, and Praise Team in September. We are also preparing for a new year of Confirmation classes.

Confirmation is open to students entering 7th grade and older. Because confirmation is offered every other year, participants often include a mix ages, including students who are beginning the process. Through worship, service, discussion, and shared experiences, students are encouraged to explore their faith, build meaningful relationships, and begin taking ownership of their spiritual journey. Classes will meet Sundays during second service from 10:30–11:30 a.m., with additional monthly activities focused on connecting, growing, and serving together.

We are also seeking adult mentors to walk alongside our confirmation students throughout the year. Mentors provide encouragement, friendship, and guidance as students grow in faith. If you are interested in learning more about Confirmation or becoming a mentor, please contact Kristal Melbye.

UMCWFB Missions Team: Building a Mosaic of Support



Our church's commitment to becoming a "Mosaic Covenant" church includes working with a local non-profit organization. This is symbolized by the red band within the mosaic. Mission Committee has scheduled a stock box packing/food sorting event with the Hunger Task Force on August 25 from 1-3 PM. It will take place at their main facility at 50th and Electric Ave. in West Allis.



Hunger Task Force (HTF) is one of the two food banks which supply, no charge, food to many food pantries and meal programs throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The food they give out is supplied by donations from individuals, purchased from the government and from their farm in Franklin.

We will either be packing stock boxes which go to seniors and other low income families or we will be sorting and boxing donated food into various categories which then goes to food pantries. Our own Rooted and Rising has been using HTF as their main supplier of stock boxes and sorted food for many years.

You will have an opportunity to sign up for this event in August. More information will be forthcoming in future "Weekly Connections" and the August newsletter.

JULY BIRTHDAY WISHES

1st - Mary Mueller, Allison Feix

2nd - Kevin McMahon

3rd - John Wierschem, Nancy Bolender, Jodi Houge

4th - Tom Ebert, Kathryn Yunk

5th - Barb Armstrong, Lynn Bennett

6th - Linda Vance

7th - Beth MacNeil

8th - Betty Koch, Lauren Toll, Molly Milia

9th - Nancy Batchelder, Claire Knab

10th - Tom Webster, Amber Kind-Keppel

11th - Ben Wunderlich, Joyce Michelstetter, Meg Kenning

12th - Nicholas Gorham, Jen Mitchell

14th - Cathy Lathrop, Bob Scheelk

15th - Linda Serrano, Linda Lalicata

16th - Andrew Joeckel

18th - Matt Fisher, Cam Brawley

19th - Dean Kenning

20th - Lea Rayman

21st - Aaron Bubb

22nd - Daniel Whitney, Alta Lybeck, Addie Lybeck

23rd - Rachel Andeen

25th - Karen Haedt

26th - Carl Trimble

27th - Josh Averbek

28th - Susan Westergard, Ally Melbye, Luke Melbye

29th - Sue Krezoski, Ann Yurkowitz

31st - Julie Hapeman



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
of Whitefish Bay

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

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