

**Hawley United Methodist Church Newsletter:
April & May 2024
Pastoral Letter**

May 2, 2024



Dear Hawley United Methodist Church Family,

May the peace of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with all of you this day! At the time of this writing, the Postponed 2020 General Conference of the United Methodist Church is being held in North Carolina. They meet every four years. The General Conference is composed of both clergy and laity who have been elected to represent their churches. The General Conference is the only body of the Church that can change our *Book of Discipline*, and they did so yesterday (May 1, 2024).

Like many of you, I have been closely following the happenings at General Conference. There is much that remains to be seen, but what I can say for certain is that there are still many complexities to navigate.

Once the events of General Conference have concluded, the leadership of the Susquehanna Conference will be hosting debriefing sessions to help explain all that transpired. I do not want to comment at length until I have heard guidance from our Conference Leadership. For now, I will keep my thoughts brief and to the point:

First and foremost in my life, I have made a Covenant with God to honor and care for the Church. I am blessed to have been given the sacred duty of serving as the pastor here at Hawley United Methodist Church. Wherever you stand upon these divisive issues—and I know there are many people with strong feelings across the spectrum—please know that I offer you the love of Christ. Please don't let these issues tear our church family apart. Instead, let us be united in our love of Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

In the future, I plan to hold informational sessions about the practice and governance of the United Methodist Church. I will also be glad to answer any questions to the best of my ability.

May the Peace of Christ Be with You,

--Rev. Rebecca L. Holland



Important Episcopal Letter from our Bishops

May 1, 2024

Dear Siblings in Christ of the Susquehanna Annual Conference,

After years of intensive and prayerful debate, the General Conference delegates from

all over the world voted to remove language that prohibited United Methodist clergy from performing weddings for same-gender couples. This change allows churches and clergy to operate according to their conscience, without consequence.

There are some important things about this decision that we want you to know. First, pastors have always decided who they will marry. This is based on several factors including the couples' preparation for the marriage covenant. This has not changed. Pastors will continue to decide who they will marry. No one will force a pastor to officiate a marriage ceremony for any couple.

Second, churches will continue to determine what weddings are held in their church buildings. This is the decision of the local church's Board of Trustees. Further, the desires of all clergy and congregations in this matter are to be honored and not judged by others.

Specifically, the change will include new language in ¶ 419.12 Book of Discipline that states:

13. The superintendent shall not penalize any clergy from performing, or refraining from performing, a same-sex marriage service.

14. The superintendent shall neither require any local church to hold or prohibit a local church from holding a same-sex marriage service on property owned by a local church.

We know that different people have different opinions on these matters and the diversity of perspectives needs to be respected.

The delegates of the General Conference also voted to remove prohibitions that prevented a Board of Ordained Ministry from recommending a gay or lesbian person for ordination. Gay persons may enter the process to become candidates for ministry, and if approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry, can now be licensed, commissioned, and ordained.

Please be assured that the Bishop and Cabinet will continue to work with churches and clergy to ensure we have the best match possible when making appointments.

We want everyone to have a VITAL ministry, not a ministry defined by conflict. We have always worked to place all pastors in appointments where they will be accepted and will be able to work in partnership with the laity to further the mission of Jesus Christ. Our commitment to the local church and the mission of Christ has not changed. Your district superintendent will continue to be your primary contact on appointment-related issues.

These recent decisions at the General Conference reinforce the primacy of God's love in our lives and the world and add complexity to our life together as United Methodists.

We realize this General Conference decision may bring about various emotions and reactions within our congregations and the broader denomination. There will no doubt be some who are disheartened and pained by this decision as



well as some who welcome it. As we collaborate and work together, we feel sure that we can navigate the complexity and respect one another.

The removal of the language around human sexuality returns us to the Book of Discipline that we have had from the founding of the church in 1784 until 1972 when the General Conference first added the restrictive measures into the Book of Discipline.

As United Methodists in the Susquehanna Conference, we remain committed to upholding our Wesleyan values of love, grace, and inclusivity. While we may not all agree on every issue, we are called to continue embodying the love of Christ in our interactions with one another. We invite you to strive to maintain a spirit of unity. Our unity is in Christ and therefore, it is more important than ever to engage in respectful dialogue, compassionate listening, and prayerful practice with one another.

The church is the only institution that exists for those who are not yet a part of it. It exists so others can come to know Christ. It exists to make disciples. Our communion table is open, and so are our hearts. We have important work to do — together. Without fear, and with the joy of the Lord, let's get to the work Jesus calls us to do. Let us be people who share the transforming power of Christ with the world.

In Ministry with you,

*Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball & Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
Resident Bishops*



Easter Baptisms



It was a joy to celebrate four baptisms today and one reaffirmation of faith at our 8 am Easter Service!

Happy Baptism to Malachi, Grace, Dashawn, and Joseph! Welcome to the family of God! Happy Easter!

Thank you Susie G., for making our sanctuary look so lovely for Easter Sunday! Your gift for flower arranging helped us to visualize the garden where Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. Also, thank you to everyone who ordered Easter flowers to help beautify our worship space. God bless you all!





This aspergillum & aspersorium were purchased in loving memory of the Rev. Marty Cox. These items are used to help us all remember our baptism & be thankful.



Welcome to our New Church Members!

They were first used on the Second Sunday of Easter April 7, 2024, at a service to welcome new members & reaffirm our own baptismal vows.



Faith Friends: Children's Ministry at HUMC



During this Eastertide, we celebrated the addition of three new church members to our church family!

Welcome Stephen, Neil, and Jeanette to the family of Hawley United Methodist Church!



We had the joy of teaching 15 local children about Jesus on Wednesday afternoons from October through the beginning of April. This program was a beautiful ministry that resulted in four baptisms at Easter. I am grateful to all of our volunteers who generously gave their time and talents to teach the children the stories of our faith.

Our Faith Friends after-school program concluded with an early Pentecost party! The highlight of the event was a concert presented by the children under the direction of our Music Director, Mrs. Joy Stebbins. The children sang many of the songs they had learned throughout the year and families were invited to attend. We also had snacks.

As a special gift, we gave the children t-shirts with our Church's name on them so they could

("Faith Friends," continued) remember our time together. Thank you to Alexa for designing these wonderful shirts!



Thank You Our Music Directory, Mrs. Joy Stebbins, for 10 Years of Faithful Service!



Make a joyful noise unto the Lord! On Sunday, April 14, 2024, we gave thanks to God for our Director of Music, Mrs. Joy Stebbins, and celebrated her ten years of service here at Hawley UMC.

We are so thankful for her faithful service to our congregation. Joy is a blessing, and her music greatly enriches our worship service. Joy's musical gifts help our congregation to connect to God, and especially with her amazing accompanying and choir conducting skills. Thank you, Joy, for all your faithful service!



Vacation Bible School: Camping with Jesus!
Have s'more of God's love!

Families and children are invited to join us for Vacation Bible School! This summer our VBS will take place throughout the weekend.

VBS will begin on Saturday, August 9th at 3 PM. We will start by having a Bible Lesson, games, crafts, and music for the children. Then, at 5 PM everyone is invited to join us for a campfire in the parking lot. We are planning to make s'mores and sing campfire songs!

The fun continues on **Friday, August 10th, at 10 AM.** The kids will continue to learn important Bible Lessons throughout the morning. Then during lunchtime, everyone is invited to join us for a cookout at noon. We are planning to grill up some tasty food and enjoy fellowship together.

Finally, everyone is invited to join us on Sunday morning for worship. **The children will share some songs and what they learned at VBS during our 10 AM Worship service.**

Hope to see you there! To register, contact the church office or visit our website at HawleyUMC.com.



Holy Week Worship Team



Thank you so much to everyone who helped with our Holy Week Services.

Thank you to Rev. Clarissa Holland of the Greater New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church for helping to lead our Holy Thursday Service. Our Holy Thursday Service included Holy Communion and Anointing for Healing.

Thank you also to our many talented readers and musicians who helped with our Good Friday Service. Our Good Friday service was focused on meditating upon the Passion of the Christ through Scripture and Song. The Chancel Choir shared a deeply moving anthem about Mary weeping at the foot of the cross and the congregation sang many traditional Lenten hymns. At the end of the service, the altar was stripped and the church was left in dark silence to await the coming of Resurrection Sunday.



Sojourner's Cafe
Community Lunch
June 1, 2024
11:30 AM-12:30 PM
315 Church St Hawley PA
Hawley United Methodist Church

You're Invited: An Afternoon of Music Sunday, May 26th at 2 PM



A MUSICAL AFTERNOON
May 26, 2024
Starting at 2:00 PM
Free Benefit Concert,
Dessert & Coffee
Hawley UMC 315 Church St, Hawley PA 18428

FREE!

Join us as we kick off the summer afternoon full of music, including Guitars! Strings! Piano! Saxophone! Handbells! Vocalists! And more! Have a blast as we present many different musical pieces in a variety of styles. Hear an original piece by our Music Director, Joy Stebbins! Enjoy the Joyful Ringers as they present a piece by Sir Elton John! Come savor some tasty desserts!

**This event is free and open to the public, but we also gladly accept donations to benefit Hawley United Methodist Church.*



Honduras Mission Team

Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, June 15th

\$10/meal



8 Am till 12 PM



Happy Birthday to

April

Mary H	April 5
Becky A	April 14
Cheryl A	April 16
John Cy	April 28

May

Sally L	May 19
Jerry A	May 19
Marcia K	May 20
Michael S	May 20
Brian L, Sr	May 31
Meredith H	May 7



HAPPY
Anniversary

Happy Anniversary to

April: Sue & Jerry A	April 24
May: Melissa & Tim J	May 1



"The greatest thing in prayer is to feel that we are putting our hearts into the hands of God and that he is taking hold of them."
By John Wesley

**Let's Get Involved:
June 30th at 11:15AM**

Join us for usher training, PowerPoint training, and altar guild training! Lots of great ways to get involved!



STAFF & VOLUNTEER
Appreciation Day



Sunday July 21, 2024

Upcoming Dates:

Sunday, May 12th: Ascension Sunday & Happy Mother's Day!

Sunday, May 19th: Pentecost

Sunday, May 26th: A Musical Afternoon at 2 PM: Please come join us as we kick off the summer with some great music and raise some money for our Church!

May 29th- June 1st: Annual Conference in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

Saturday, June 1: Sojourner's Café 1:30 AM-12:30 PM

Sunday, June 9th: Guest Preacher Welcome, Mrs. Ellen Silsby!

Saturday, June 15th: Honduras Pancake Breakfast: 8 AM-Noon

Sunday, June 16th: Father's Day with Guest Preacher, Mrs. Ellen Silsby

Sunday, June 30th: Altar Gild, PowerPoint, & Usher Training. 11:15 AM

Sunday, July 21st: Staff & Volunteer Appreciation Sunday

August 9-10th: VBS: Camping with Jesus. Have s'more of God's love!

