



# The Messenger

United Methodist Church – 2210 Sixth Avenue East, Alexandria, MN 56308

Gary Taylor – email: [pastorgary@alexumc.org](mailto:pastorgary@alexumc.org)

February 2021

Ginger Mayer

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and Peace be with you through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I extend my thanks to Reverend Amanda Lunemann as she filled in for me on the Sundays I was on vacation. I loved her use of internet “memes” to draw us in.

I am currently reading a book written by Brian McLaren, “Faith After Doubt” (though I am not done as I write this). (A group of Alexandria Area pastors, including me, bought the book and talked with Rev. McLaren on Tuesday as part of his promotional campaign.) His main premise is that there are stages of faith. This concept is not new, many have posited similar ideas, and is related to our educational growth and maturation through life. McLaren

proposes four stages: *Simplicity*; *Complexity*; *Perplexity*; and *Harmony*. He states that each of those stages of faith are neither good nor bad. Each has benefits and each can be used or result in negatives. In a perfect world, everyone will start in *Simplicity* and grow through the stages to *Harmony*. It reminds me of one verse in 1 Corinthians, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.” (13:11) This may sound familiar because it is often read in weddings as part of the longer “love chapter”. The chapter began as an extension of 12:31, “But strive for the greater gifts and I will show you a still more excellent way,” and ends with “And faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

You may be asking yourself, and me, “What about the “doubt” part of the title”? In McLaren’s understanding, it takes doubt to move us from one stage to the next. For example, *Simplicity* is all about rules, black and white, do this and don’t do that. This is easiest for children and those new to faith to understand. However, when we get stuck there the rules become consuming or limiting. When we begin to doubt that rules can cover everything, we struggle. We either try to fully embrace *Simplicity* or we begin to understand that faith can be complex. For many this is not easy, but our doubts help us to move from *Simplicity* to *Complexity*. Doubt helps us to grow through the stages of faith.

McLaren’s book is too long to go into detail about all the stages, but I’ll try to summarize. *Simplicity* is about the rules. *Complexity* is about all the ways we try to make sense of faith: 5 simple steps to . . . ; 12 traits of . . . ; Building a better . . . ; etc. *Perplexity* is about deconstructing and questioning all the rules, programs, systems, and the like of the two previous stages. It’s like doubt is a stage all its own.

*Harmony* is the time we finally give up, give it all to God, and trust that God is all there is. 1 John 4:16 states, “So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love,

and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” McLaren states that *Harmony* is all about radical, revolutionary, all-encompassing LOVE. Perhaps that was what Paul was getting at in 1 Corinthians 13.

Some churches and the people in them are all about the rules (*Simplicity*). Some are about their programs (*Complexity*). I don't think there are any churches where everyone questions everything (*Perplexity*) but maybe (?). Is there a church where everyone is in the *Harmony* stage?

All the churches I have served in 20, soon to be 21, years have had people at all four stages of faith, though those in the *Perplexity* stage tend not to stick with something they are questioning. People in stage 1 want the rules to be strictly adhered to and sometimes get upset when the rules are broken. Stage 2 people want the next best program and may get upset if the church doesn't meet their needs. *Harmony* stage people tend not to get upset at much, though they can sometimes be condescending to people who haven't reached that stage. In other words, church can be messy and I love it.

Finally, I hope all of us can be accepting of each other no matter which stage of faith we or someone else is in. Rules can be bent, programs will not achieve what was promised, and doubters will be present. However, in the end there will be faith with doubt, hope with fear, and love. And the greatest of these is love, the more excellent way.

Pastor Gary

## RULE OF CHRIST

Hello Everyone,

At the end of November, the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the staff at Alexandria UMC, myself, and others will be trained in the use of **Rule of Christ**. What is **Rule of Christ** and how does it apply to all of us at AUMC?

The purpose of **Rule of Christ** is to gracefully resolve disagreements arise within the church between two or more people using the procedure as described in Matthew 18:8-9, 15-17:

<sup>8</sup>“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.”

<sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.

<sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

But, let us not forget Matthew 18:21-22:

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven).”

If you or I have a disagreement, dispute, concern, or conflict with another person in our church (often it is the pastor), what do we do? Our natural inclinations are to complain to friends against that person to get the friend on our side (called “triangulation”). Then we may try to get someone in power on our side. As this happens, the discontent within the church begins to grow. Rumors are spread. Falsehoods creep into the story. Eventually things come to a boil. Unfortunately, this does no one any good and is disruptive to the Body of Christ, the church. Jesus tells us what we should be doing in the verses I quoted above and will outline below.

The steps involved in using **Rule of Christ** are:

1. *Discern God’s Will* – What is the concern? What is my position? Can I let it go? (Matthew 18:8-9, 21-22) Is there history behind my concern? What is my perception of the other person’s position? What part am I responsible? What does God want?

2. *Speak with the other person involved.* (Matthew 18:15) – Plan ahead and know what you will say. Meet at a neutral location and remember we are all part of the body of Christ. State your grievance and try to resolve the conflict between the two of you. If the grievance is resolved, the process is complete. If not, go to the next step.

3a. If the concern is with the pastor, *establish a meeting with SPRC chair and pastor.* (Matthew 18:16) – The person with the grievance must provide a written statement of their concern prior to the meeting. All persons invited to the meeting will be made aware of who will be attending and that the meeting will be a closed meeting.

3b. If the concern is with someone on staff, *establish a meeting with the SPRC liaison and the person.* (Matthew 18:16) – See 3a.

3c. If the concern is with someone else in the church, *establish a meeting with the Pastor and that person.* (Matthew 18:16) – See 3a.

4a. *If a resolution cannot be agreed upon* with the pastor and SPRC Chair, the concern will be taken to the SPRC. (Matthew 18:17a) – The person with the grievance must provide a written and signed statement of their concern prior to the meeting. The person with the grievance may bring one or two others who share the concern to participate in the meeting. All persons invited to the meeting will be made aware of who will be attending and that the meeting will be a closed meeting. A summary of the Step 3 meeting should be provided.

4b. *If a resolution cannot be agreed upon* with the staff person and the SPRC liaison, the concern will be taken to the SPRC. (Matthew 18:17a) – See 4a.

4c. *If a resolution cannot be agreed upon* with a person in the church and the Pastor, the concern will be taken to the SPRC. (Matthew 18:17a) – See 4a.

5. Finally, this step can occur at any point: *Forgiveness* (Matthew 18:21-22). – Can we acknowledge the hurt and let it go? Can we see the goodness of the other person? Will we recognize Christ in the other person?

Please remember, AUMC wants to be a healthy, vibrant church where all are working toward the same vision and mission. We realize that all are fallible and we all make mistakes. Further, while we hope that all disagreements, disputes, concerns, or conflicts will have a good resolution, there will be times where no resolution can be found. When that happens, we try to remember that Jesus tells us to forgive one another 77 times (or 70 times  $7 = 490$ ).

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Gary



Nursery is no longer staffed. So parents MUST watch their own child(ren). There is a speaker in the room to listen to the sermon.

Toys are available in Cart Two.

Reminder that we are following our Building Use Policy—the church entrance doors will remain locked unless there are two people present in the building. Please call ahead before you come to church, as there are times when we are not in the building, even though we are working. Also, most days someone is in the office earlier than 9:00 a.m. and

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### **Office Hours**

**Pastor Gary**—Tue-Friday

**Admin. Assist.** Ginger Mayer

Office is open (9:00-1:00)

Mon-Tue-Wed-Thurs-Fri

**Megan Lenz**— Director CYFM

Mon, Thurs, Fri (9-11:30)

### **Publication Date for the next *Messenger*:**

Articles for the February issue need to be in the office by NOON on Monday Jan 25th

### **Worship Attendance**

Service	2021	2020	
	1st	1st	2nd
Jan 3	73	47	58
Jan 10	73	50	65
Jan 17	113	27	51
Jan 24	81	46	74
Jan 31		55	72



*In your prayers, please remember all in positions of leadership, people serving in dangerous and difficult settings, returned and returning service people and their families, all who seek and await peace.*

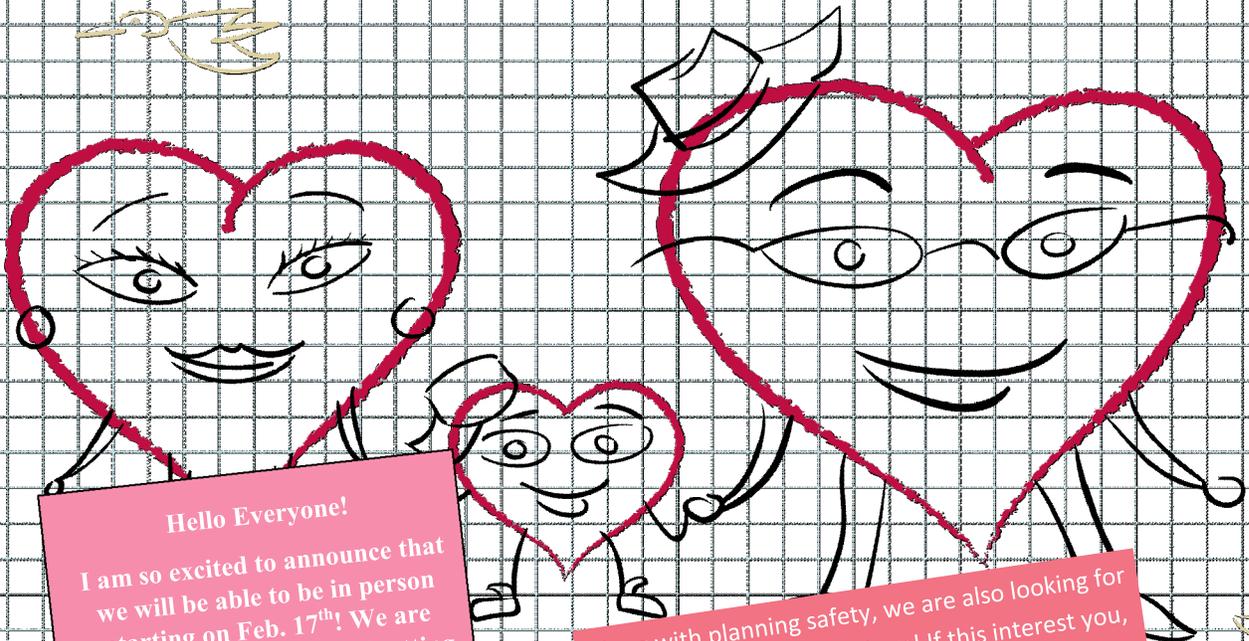
# FEBURARY 2021 CHILDREN'S NEWSLETTER

## C47 Team

KIM

AMY

CHERYL



Hello Everyone!

I am so excited to announce that we will be able to be in person starting on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>! We are working on planning and setting up safety precautions for everyone! I look forward to meeting and getting to know everyone! See you then!

God bless, Megan Lenz

Along with planning safety, we are also looking for some Sunday School teachers! If this interest you, please email Megan Lenz for more information!

3 yr.-4 yr.—two (rotate every other week)

K-3<sup>rd</sup>—two (rotate every other week)

4-6<sup>th</sup>—two (rotate every other week)

Subs—two (be on hand in case we ever needed an extra teacher to fill in)

FEBURARY 2021 YOUTH  
NEWSLETTER

*Hello Youth!*



Hello Youth and Family!

Welcome to February! I am so excited to announce that we will be starting in-person youth group and Sunday school on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>! Watch for more information about how we will be doing this with proper precautions. We are also looking for some Sunday school leaders for the elementary Sunday school. If this interest you, please let me know!

February 3<sup>rd</sup>—Youth group via Zoom @6:30 p.m.

February 10<sup>th</sup>—Youth group via Zoom @ 6:30 P.M.

February 17<sup>th</sup>—First in person Youth Group! @ 6:30 P.M.

February 24<sup>th</sup>—Youth Group @ 6:30 P.M.



# FEBRUARY



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 5:30 Finance Committee Mtg	5	6
7 9AM Worship On Youtube 6:30 SPRC mtg	8	9 9:30 AM Brush & Palette 3:00 PM Bible Study	10 5:30 Trustees mtg	11 6:30 Church Council	12	13
14 9AM Worship On Youtube 	15	16 9:30 AM Brush & Palette 3:00 PM Bible Study	17 6:30 PM Ash Wednesday worship in Sanctuary	18	19	20
21 9AM Worship	22	23 9:30 AM Brush & Palette 3:00 PM Bible Study	24	25	26	27
28 9AM Worship						

# Alexandria United Methodist

## Community News

### Worship in the Sanctuary in the Season of COVID-19

The COVID-19 daily cases in Douglas County are at a manageable level now. I, Pastor Gary, am tentatively planning on having in-sanctuary worship beginning Ash Wednesday, February 17, at 6:30 pm and Sunday, February 21, at 9:00 am. If the daily new cases begin to climb, I may call this off. Assuming that everything remains at the current levels, here are the “rules” for gathering together.

If you are uncomfortable attending worship at this time, if you are vulnerable and could have an adverse reaction to COVID-19, if someone in your home is vulnerable, or you are the least bit ill please consider staying home and watching the service on our YouTube channel, “Alex UMC”.

1. Please enter the building using the right two doors; they will be marked “Entrance”. Please use the right two doors when exiting; they will be appropriately marked. The ONLY exception will be for people using wheelchairs.
2. Hand sanitizer is available in multiple locations. We should make use of them often.
3. All people in the building and sanctuary are required to wear masks even if you have been vaccinated. NO Exceptions!
4. Some sort of electronic bulletin will be available to those with cell phones, iPads, or similar devices. Bulletins, hymnals, Bibles, and attendance pads will not be used and have been removed from the sanctuary. The service will be projected using PowerPoint.
  - A. If you wish to use a Bible, there is a wonderful cellphone app I use every day called “YouVersion”. You can find it in the Apple Store or Google Play. It has 61 English language Bibles. I highly recommend it.
5. Greeters and Ushers will not be used at this time.
6. People entering into the sanctuary will be appropriately spaced
  - A. The pews will not be marked. We trust you to sit 6 to 8 feet apart from other family units. Of course, couples and families who live together should sit together.
  - B. Please should move into an available interior section of the pew.

In other words, you may not sit at the end of a pew if an interior section is available, because . . .
  - c. No one should cross over another to get to a section.
7. Singing – People may sing the hymns softly while wearing facemasks. (I know this is against advice but if we are appropriately spaced, wearing masks, and singing *softly* I can’t see the harm.)
8. Passing the Peace will be dropped for the time being.
9. Baskets to collect offerings will be placed so people can give. Offering plates will not be passed around. Mailed in or electronic giving is highly recommended.
10. Communion
  - A. Pastor will have a loaf and a cup for the communion great thanksgiving  
These will not be used for the congregation
  - B. Individual communion packets will be used for the person receiving communion  
One person using tongs will place (more like a short drop) it into the hand of the worshiper
  - C. Trash receptacle will be placed so worshipers can dispose of their waste following worship.
11. With the conclusion of the service, worshipers should exit the sanctuary and building maintaining proper distance with others. There will not be a time of fellowship and coffee (darn!).

# Alexandria United Methodist

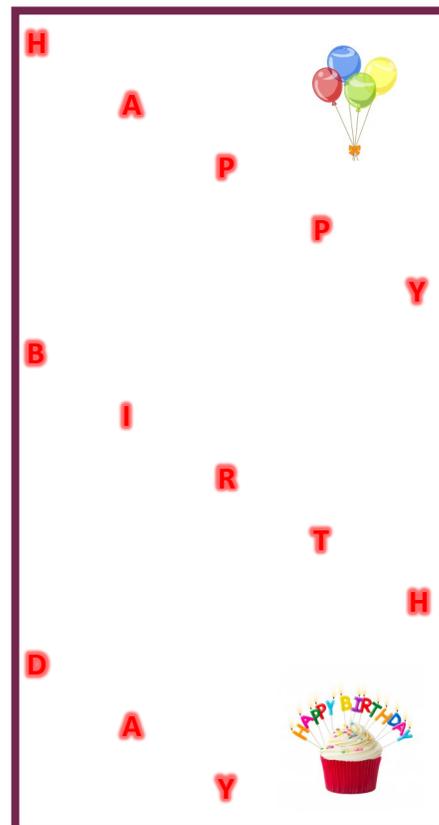
## Community News

**Tax Preparation:** Again this year West Central Minnesota Communities Action is providing free tax preparation and e-filing in our community. This service is offered to single persons with incomes of less than \$33,000 and families (2 or more persons) with incomes of less than \$53,000. The tax preparation is done by volunteers that have been tested and certified through the IRS. Contact WCMCA at 218-6985-4486 extension 5 to set up an appointment. Reservations can also be made on-line at [wcmca.org](http://wcmca.org) under Finances and Free Tax preparation. E-filing is available for Federal and Minnesota income tax as well as rent credit and real estate property tax credit. Covid-19 safety precautions are in place and a combination of virtual, drop-off and in person preparation will be utilized. Carol Meyer, of our congregation, is a long time volunteer and will be glad to visit with you if you have any questions. She can be contacted at 320 763-5814 and a message can be left.

## February Birthdays

- 2) Preston Kunkel  
Dan Olson  
Aaron Thomson
- 6) Amy Balcome
- 7) Jackson Cavers  
Brian Koehn
- 9) Betty Sax
- 10) Maurine Hamelau
- 12) Elliott Cummins
- 13) Eden Phillips
- 15) John Heydt

- 16) Chuck Bollen
- 17) Gary Seiler
- 18) Otto Freier
- 19) Adam Cummins
- 20) Lee Moench
- 22) Aubree Miller
- 23) Nicole Witt
- 24) Deb Parrott
- 27) Allea Balcome
- 28) Pat Sherman





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**Return Service Requested**