

December 23, 2022



**Marion First United
Methodist Church**

The **mission** of the Church is to
make Disciples of **Jesus Christ** for
the **transformation** of the World.

THE LINE IS CROSSED



*For unto us a child is born,
To us a son is given, and the
government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6)*

The virgin **was** with child;
The child **was** born in Bethlehem and his parents
were **in** the line of David,
The angel provided his human father with a name
that means “**the LORD saves;**”
A star was set in the sky as a beacon for the seeker
The LINE was crossed!

This prophecy rested on the hearts and minds of faithful Hebrew people for several centuries. The prophecies of God in flesh were wonderful and not yet fulfilled. What a difficult time. Multitudes cast their gaze on the line that separated before and after. Day after day, year after year, generation after generation, there was not a crossing.

The Lord himself will give you a sign; The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

This prophecy also stood for generations proclaiming the reversal of the human impossibilities, virgin birth, and the human presence of God with His people. Most people learned it, spoke it, and allowed it to be part of their spiritual heritage, but as the centuries passed, longing for such an improbability likely dissolved into some sort of spiritual nostalgia.

That may be why so many missed the signs. Improbability and nostalgia were better known and more well beloved than the possibility of God's incarnating himself in human history. But then –

History would now be marked as “before” and “after” that crossing. The world had changed.

God has crossed the line of history.

God also crosses the line of our personal “history.” When we fully expect the Lord to cross our line and yearn to accept him as our Lord and Savior, we are truly seeking and expecting the Christ of Christmas. Of this Charles Wesley wrote (and we have been singing these past four weeks):

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

If we expect and allow God to cross the line in our hearts, we truly will have a Merry Christmas! I pray you do.

Pastor Mike

Pastor Mike Morgan

Lead Pastor

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CONTACT US:

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Minister of Pastoral Care

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Holiday Schedule

December 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services
2:00, 4:00, and 6:00 PM

Christmas Eve Communion in Room 100
2:45 to 6:00 PM

Christmas Day, December 25

Sunday Morning Worship*
9:30 AM

New Year's Day, January 1

Sunday Morning Worship*
9:30 AM

*No Nursery or Pathfinders Children's Discipleship classes

Joys and Concerns

December Food Pantry Item - Pudding and Gelatin Mixes

Prayer Requests

1. To submit a prayer concern, request or praise, please use the Prayer button at the end of the weekly email or on the church website, www.marionmethodist.org.
2. To be on the email prayer chain to pray for others, email Vicki Standley, Director of Pastoral Care at vstandley@marionmethodist.org.

Stewardship

Alternative ways to give during this time

1. Mail offering to:
Marion Methodist Church
1298 7th Avenue
Marion, IA 52302
2. Give online at www.MarionMethodist.org/give
3. Text offering to 319-313-5359
Include \$ Amount and ministry code

Text to give Ministry Codes:

Operating Budget Text GEN

TV Broadcast

Marion Methodist worship services are typically rebroadcast on Mediacom or ImOn Channel 4 at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings. There is a multiweek delay between when a sermon is preached and when it airs on TV.

Pastoral Care Message - JOY

Joy is a word that has multiple meanings and nuances. Joy can be used as a girl's name - I have a cousin named Joy, and her Mom was named Hope. True story! Joy has also been a dish soap and if you're so inclined, and have the money, you can purchase Joy perfume by Dior. There are t-shirts and home décor that read "Choose Joy", in fact if you look on Amazon you can find products of all kinds that have Joy in their product name or title.



It's no wonder that the word joy is hard to interpret because, like so many words in the English language, you have to know the context it's being used in and the intent of its use. I'm sure we've all known moments of utter joy in our lives. One that comes to mind for me was when Josh was about 2½. Because of Down syndrome, many of his developmental milestones were delayed but he was plugging through them fairly well, in his own time. He was crawling and standing up to things, but walking hadn't happened yet.

One Saturday afternoon, he and I had been playing in the living room when I got a call from my mom. As we were chatting, Josh took off crawling to his room. A few minutes later, I spotted him peeking around the doorway and he was standing up. When he saw me he dropped to the floor and took off again. Soon he was standing at the doorway again and started walking slowly towards me with a big grin on his face, taking quite a few steps till he dropped to his knees once again.



I thought my heart would burst with joy! Such a common milestone, that most children accomplish much earlier, but Josh kept working at it until one day the pieces all came together. That was a moment of pure, unbridled joy! But as great as that joyful feeling was, the joy of knowing Jesus and accepting him as our Savior is a hundred, no a thousand times greater.

The joy we have in Jesus runs deeper, is stronger and can withstand anything that life throws at us. It may not make things easier, in fact we oftentimes work harder, knowing it's for all for Jesus. The joy of knowing him and what he's done for us, taking on our sins and failures, and making a way for us to stand in the very presence of God, makes our hearts sing with Joy and thanksgiving. And because of that great joy that he's put in our hearts, our greatest desire is to serve him and share that joy with others who may need just that - the joy of Jesus in their lives.

Our Christmas Eve services always end with that great hymn "Joy to the World" and it seems like everyone throws their entire beings into singing that beautiful hymn once again. Since he was very little Josh has loved that hymn and grins from ear to ear when the opening notes are played. He knows that joy that comes from working hard to accomplish a milestone, and he knows the joy of Jesus in his heart and that brings joy to me.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

God's blessings to you,
Vicki





TROOP 35'S WINTER



**LANDFILL RESCUE
BOOK RECYCLING**

CLEAN OUT YOUR ATTIC, BASEMENT, GARAGE
OR JUST MAKE MORE ROOM ON YOUR
SHELVES.

Contact Mark Morgan at 319-213-2321 or
markmorgan3135@gmail.com for more information

SERVICE MINISTRY FAIR

Sunday, January 15
8:00 AM to 11:30 AM
THE CENTER

4:12 Winter Retreat



Registration for our winter retreat is now open! For registrations or to find out more information go to marionmethodist.org/youth

One of the questions I've been getting from the students is "What is a youth retreat?" I'll assume you know the answer to that. So I

want to dive deeper into the question of "Why is it important for you to send your child to a retreat?" As the word "retreat" helps explains it, it's an opportunity for young people to get away from their normal routine. I am sure it's no surprise to you, but young people nowadays are more stressed than ever before, and the levels of anxiety and mental health struggles have skyrocketed. A retreat provides an opportunity to unplug for at least 24 hours, and get in touch with their peers and caring adults that want the best for them and their faith.

Jesus modeled the importance of retreating ourselves to focus on our relationship with God. If Jesus himself expressed the need to retreat, I think we as human beings who value faith should do the same.

Last but not least, an important reason is that it's so much fun! Youth create memories that will last a lifetime. I am not sure about you, but I had the opportunity to grow in the church and be part of many camps and retreats and those memories are still treasured in my heart.

So I hope that at 4:12 we will have the opportunity to make retreats like this one a tradition and your child will join us!

Gonzo

Handbell Christmas Thank you!
Thank you to everyone who attended and supported our ringers at our Handbell Christmas Concert! Thank you for your generous support of the Marion Food Pantry in non-perishable food items and cash donations!

A big shout out to Diane Beach, piano; Diana Knight, BIG chimes; and Eli Bushlack, our "Little Drummer Boy"! You enhanced the program and we cannot thank you enough!

We had great behind-the-scenes help from the tech team, safety team, nursery attendants and the connections team. Thank you for your support and assistance. We really appreciate you!

A big thank you to the United Methodist Men who outdid themselves with the wonderful homemade soups, brownies and ice cream! The fellowship that went along with the meal was a perfect way to end the afternoon!

During this time of Advent, take time to appreciate the gift of salvation given to each of us from God, in His Son, Christ Jesus!

Merry Christmas!

Membership Hour

Do you have questions about becoming a member at Marion Methodist? Need help downloading/navigating the Church Center app? Want to



make sure that your church profile information is up to date? Visit the East Welcome Center on Sunday, January 8th from 9 - 10:15 AM and Dionna will be more than happy to assist you with any membership related questions or needs!

Year-End Giving for 2022

As 2022 closes, our final deposit will be made on Friday, December 30th at 10:00AM. For your gifts or offerings to be included with your 2022 Giving Statement they must be received at the church office by that time. If you have any questions or special circumstances, please contact John Terry at 377-4856.

If gifts or offerings are received or postmarked in 2022, they are recorded in 2022. If the gift or offering is received or postmarked in 2023, then it is recorded in 2023.

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of Marion Methodist. Everything that we do – all the lives that we impact – everything is possible because of your gifts and offerings.

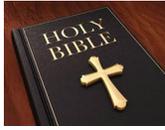
Thank you – Your Stewardship Committee

Adult Discipleship Opportunities

Sunday Mornings at 9:20 AM

Old Testament History in Room W30 ~ Starting 1/8/2023

Please join us as we continue to explore the Old Testament Books of the Bible and focus on the book of Genesis. No matter how many times we read through and study the Old Testament, there is always more insight and a better understanding as our faith journey continues. The goal of this class is to read every word in the Old Testament, and then as a World History Class, discuss the events of their known world that shaped and influenced their lives at their particular time in history. This class is open to everyone regardless of age or personal knowledge of the Old Testament.



Sermon Series Bible Study: The Emotional Roller Coaster in Room W50 ~ Starting 1/15/2023



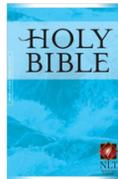
Join us for our next sermon series Bible study: The Emotional Roller Coaster. We will reach into the scriptures for guidance on mental health and Christianity. In this study we hope to help you gain a better spiritual footing when anxiety, depression, addiction, or trauma touches your life.

Wednesday Evenings at 6:30 PM

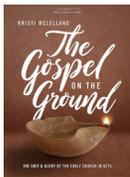
Starting on January 11th

Basic Bible in Room W50

Basic Bible this semester will dive into Basic Christian Theology and Basic Christian Behavior. For weeks we will dive into Sin, salvation, and faith as presented in the book of Romans. Our last five weeks we will immerse ourselves in a study of Christian ethics and behavior in the book of James.



Gospel On The Ground in Room W30



Come along with biblical culturalist Kristi McLelland as she unpacks the life of the early church in the book of Acts and shows us that the kingdom of God is always on the move, always looking outward to bring meaning and joy to a world searching for true fulfillment and hope.

Explore the call of Jesus to His disciples then and to us today. See how God's Word can sustain us even in the most difficult of times and embrace the transformative grace we experience as children of God in His kingdom of celebration.

1 Peter Precept Inductive Bible Study in Room W10

We'll be starting a new 8-week Precept Ministries Inductive Bible Study: 1st Peter – How to Stand Firm When Tested. The mission and vision of Precept Ministries is to assist the local church in the task of "Establishing People in God's Word", and that they would live lives as followers of Jesus Christ, studying the Bible inductively and serving the church faithfully in the power of the Holy Spirit.



Rome burned. Christians perished. Why this suffering? Where was their God? How could Christians survive the flames that

tried their faith? First Peter had the answer for then . . . and has it for today. Are you prepared for suffering? Will trials and persecutions reveal your faith and bring glory to God? What is the message of 1 Peter that has captured the hearts of hundreds of generations? What has made it a book of living hope to men and women of all nations, tongues, and ages? Our goal is to search out the answer to these questions; then, maybe the message of 1 Peter will become a priceless heritage to us also.

Please join us for this study as we learn and discuss what the Word of God says and what Peter says to believers enduring tribulations.

Sermon Series Bible Study: The Emotional Roller Coaster in Room W40



Join us for our next sermon series Bible study: The Emotional Roller Coaster. We will reach into the scriptures for guidance on mental health and Christianity. In this study we hope to help you gain a better spiritual footing when anxiety, depression, addiction, or trauma touches your life.

The Armor of God in Room E60

All day, every day, an invisible war rages around you — unseen, unheard, yet felt throughout every aspect of your life. A devoted, devilish enemy seeks to wreak havoc on everything that matters to you: your heart, your mind, your marriage, your children, your relationships, your resilience, your dreams, your destiny.



But his battle plan depends on catching you unaware and unarmed. If you're tired of being pushed around and caught with your guard down, this study is for you.

The enemy always fails miserably when he meets a woman dressed for the occasion. The Armor of God, more than merely a biblical description of the believer's inventory, is an action plan for putting it on and developing a personalized strategy to secure victory.

PATHfinders
CHILDRENS MINISTRY

Our 10:15 Sunday School has collectively raised over \$200 for the Heifer Giving Project! As our children learn about the importance of tithing, they will continue to give funds to this valuable organization through the current school year. If you would like to know more about the Heifer Giving Project, please visit <https://www.heifer.org/>