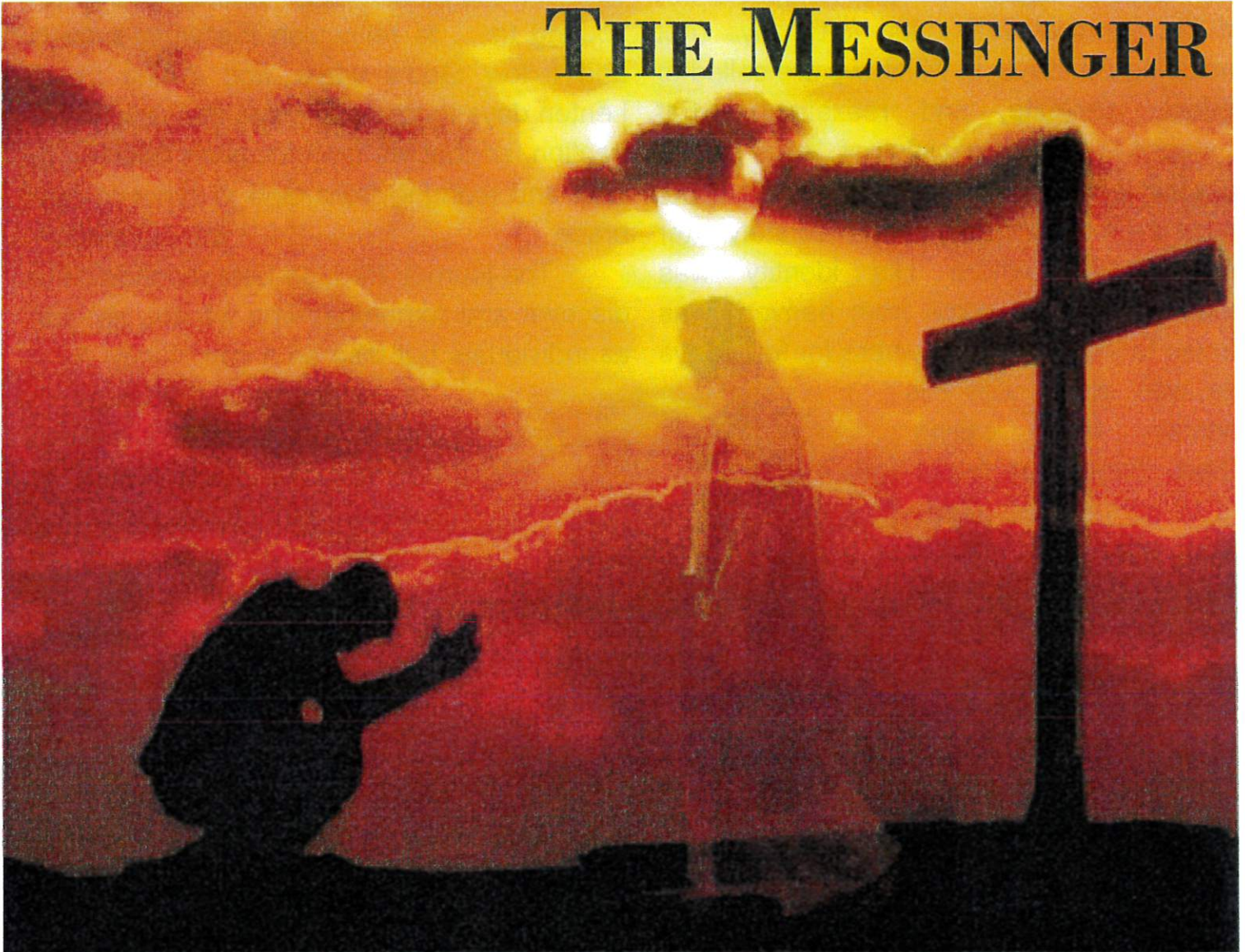


THE MESSENGER



Going through Lent is a listening.

When we listen to the word,

we hear where we are so blatantly unliving.

If we listen to the word, and hallow it into our lives,

we hear how we can so abundantly live again.

Ann Weems, Kneeling in Jerusalem,

(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), page 33.



From the Pastor's Pen

Pastor Tom Ulrich

It's Lent again... the penitential season of the liturgical year... the forty days (not including Sundays) in which we are called to reflect, ruminate, and reexamine what it means to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is not an easy journey, nor should it be, since even Jesus Himself (immediately after His baptism where His identity was confirmed by the voice from heaven) was driven to the wilderness where for forty days He was alone with His identity and calling. There Jesus was tempted to compromise God's claim upon Him and to wander from the path that God had called Him to pursue. But Jesus was not lured by a shortcut

He did not bypass the cross... and He did not waiver from His calling to serve God completely, fearlessly, faithfully.

In a similar fashion, during Lent we are also reminded that we are not just "playing" at church. Faithfulness is serious business. Yet the persuasive voices of the society around us attempt to drive the church out of the identity given to us by God, and our affinity with the familiar and the comfortable makes us wary of the demands of discipleship. The cadences of the culture drum into our minds that discipleship isn't safe... it isn't practical ...and it isn't the way to live in the "real world." But in a "real world" enmeshed in destructive habits, we attend to the good news of Lent through which God calls us to dare to

abandon the consumptive habits that are devouring us... to relinquish the world's ways and follow God's ways...and during these Lenten days to free ourselves from every distraction, so that we may focus on listening to God and learning from God in order to embrace transformation.

The journey through Lent reminds us to discover and remember who we are, not just as individuals but also as a community. As a

result, we may be inspired, not to retreat from the realities we encounter, not merely to give up something (as is the customary practice), but to explore anew what it means to be a disciple of our Lord. We may sense God's claim upon us, challenging us to

see the world's situation as it is, but also calling us to participate in the life-changing work of building God's kingdom. During this season of self-examination, we may receive enough of God's vision to contribute new hope to our fellow human beings... we may receive enough of God's strength to empower our sisters and brothers who live in fear and despair... and we may receive enough of God's love to make a difference in the world. So, as we journey through Lent, let's listen again for God's word to us, for even though the cross is ever before us during these forty days, the good news is that, at the end, we will also discover the empty tomb.

Blessings,

tom





Are We Moving Forward?

You might remember that the title of last month's *MESSENGER* article from me was "FORWARD!" So.....I ask this question, "Have we moved forward in the past month?" I feel the answer is definitely YES.

A big step forward is our acquiring the services of tech expert Bradley Van Tyne of TECHVRSE. With his assistance we can now do streaming of Tom's sermons, play videos at appropriate times during the Sunday services, get his help on any PowerPoint issue we have, and finally....we have a plan in place for him to work with Reesá in coordinating and constructing a website that will be appealing and emphasize just who we are as a congregation in our attempt to become part of the greater Akron community. A thank you to Carol Davis who, in searching the web, luckily found this individual who offered to come out for free to analyze our situation. We were all impressed by his willingness to spend much time with us on Feb. 6 and then offer a proposal that we approved at our Feb. 24 meeting.

On that same afternoon, Tim Meyer and the entire Facilities group met to go over Tim's large plan to not only improve the inside and outside of our building in 2020, but also to make a list (and keep it where it can be found) of all contacts from snowplowing to electrical and plumbing, to who fixes the church steeple, etc.

Another example of forward-moving action is having a combined regular Sunday morning worship service with Gospel of Christ Ministry on March 15, using a style of worship from both church traditions, not just what NCCC is used to.

Participation in not one, but two book fairs during May and securing volunteers for tutoring

at Case CLC are other examples of moving forward. In addition, Governing Board approved having money from the March 17 Primary Bake Sale go toward the two book fairs. Bake lots!

New Initiatives has a big role in the annual Fairlawn Hunger Walk coming up on May 3 as it relates to getting our members excited about the walk. A neat plan is in place for letting people know about the impact of our participation. (See separate article about the 2020 Hunger Walks). The group is also working on a Welcome Card for visitors plus a center area inside that is inviting.

The 2020 Directory is taking shape and will be out soon. Stop in Fellowship Hall and make any corrections to your own listing, and when needed, volunteer to staple the final product.

To answer my original question about moving forward this past month, we definitely have done so with lightning speed. However, a few items remain where we need some leadership/volunteers. We need more assistance with Member Care, not only sending cards out, but also having members visit shut-ins. And finally, we could use a fellowship activity or two planned by a few over the next several months. Be creative!

In closing, thanks to all of you for your continued support and to God for his guidance in everything we do.

Nancy Williams

Governing
Board

8500 MEALS!

Last year our congregation and friends contributed \$2030 to the Fairlawn Hunger Walk, which translated into 8500 meals for the hungry in Summit County. Quite a feat! Over \$24,000 was contributed to the Akron-Canton Regional FoodBank in money and commodities from both the walk in Fairlawn and the one in N. Canton. Our church had 22 walkers.



Can we top that in 2020?

Let's try.

11th Annual Hunger Walks



The latest statistics tell us that the overall food insecurity rate in Summit Co. is 14.9%; however, the child food insecurity rate is 19.4%. We need to do better.



Sunday, March 22 is the kickoff at our church for this year's May 3 walk in Fairlawn with registration beginning at 2:00 and the one and two-mile walks beginning at 3:00. In our church that day you will witness a conversation between Nancy Clem and Robert Roth, which will point out what your dollars will do to help alleviate hunger. On subsequent Sundays you will hear tidbits relating to hunger.

Details for the 2020 Walk are the following:

1. March 22-Kickoff Sunday during the Minute for Mission.
2. A table and poster at the rear entrance to the Sanctuary will have a signup sheet for walkers, walking envelopes, an envelope and a person collecting money for those of you who are not walking. Pay with a check to NCCC marked "Hunger Walk" in the memo line, or put in cash and give your name to the collector. If you are paying cash, we have slips if you wish a receipt for your taxes. You can donate online at akroninterfaith.org and click the button for Hunger Walk donations; however, for our church purposes, it seems to work better if you pay beforehand if you are not walking or if you are walking, pay when you register. Adult kids out of state should be encouraged to give by donating online or paying the parents in some way—Apple Pay to parents who then write a check to the church, a check to parents who then turn the money over to the church, or any other convenient method.
3. Sunday, April 19, Coffee Hour, handled by New Initiatives, will be in the back of the Sanctuary where you can watch the video from last year's walk, all before the service begins.
4. Last thing—On Sunday, April 28, when non-walkers must have their money in, we will have a FREE THANK YOU lunch for all contributors and walkers in Fellowship Hall following the service. In closing, you may sign up to walk (pick up an envelope) or contribute if you are not walking on the Sundays of March 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19, and 26 (last day).



HUNGER IN SUMMIT COUNTY

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity refers to the USDA's measure of lack of regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household's need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

THE MEAL GAP

The Meal Gap is the difference between the number of meals that are needed by community members and the number of meals they can access.

OUR RESPONSE

 **9,732,850**

TOTAL MEALS ENABLED IN SUMMIT COUNTY IN 2019

 **11,789,493**

TOTAL POUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN SUMMIT COUNTY IN 2019

 **2,616,158**

TOTAL PRODUCE POUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN SUMMIT COUNTY IN 2019

Overall Food Insecurity Rate

 **14.9%**

THERE ARE 80,830 FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE IN SUMMIT COUNTY.

Child Food Insecurity Rate

 **19.4%**

THERE ARE 22,570 FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN IN SUMMIT COUNTY.

The Meal Gap



Top Partners by Pounds

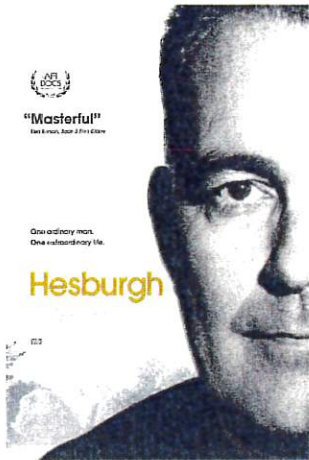
- The Sanctuary
- Arlington Memorial Baptist Church
- Good Neighbors
- Open M
- Good Samaritan Hunger Center

Number of Programs

- Food Pantries **103**
- Hot Meal Sites & Shelters **52**
- Other Non-Emergency Programs **99**
- Total Programs **254**



Civil Rights Event: “Hesburgh” A Documentary



SUNDAY, MARCH 29

1:30 – 3:30 PM

Main Library Auditorium

“Hesburgh” explores the life of Father Theodore Hesburgh, long-time president of the University of Notre Dame and a champion of human rights. At times at odds with his church and government, Hesburgh was a powerful bi-partisan force in 20th century American politics. He advised several presidents and foreign leaders and, as a member of the Civil Rights Commission, was one of the chief architects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Join us for this 2019 Cleveland International Film Festival winner and New York Times “Critics Pick.” Presented in cooperation with the Akron Area Interfaith Council.

© Southport Music Box Corp d/b/a Music Box Films 2019



MAIN LIBRARY

Akron-Summit County Public Library
Business & Government Division
60 S. High St., Akron, Ohio 44326
330.643.9020
akronlibrary.org

New Initiatives

At present the coordinators are concentrating on the **Hunger Walk**.

N.I. coordinators are preparing a Welcome Center with a welcome card for all visitors.

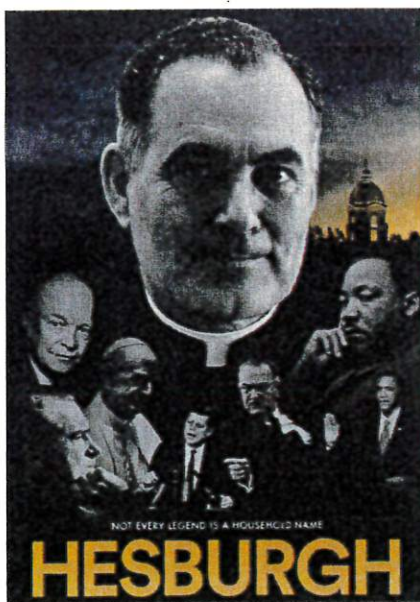
More news about future events later.

Remember.....you are all members of this group. If you have an idea, please give to Cathy King, Nancy Clem, Hal Horton, Ken or Nancy Williams, or Pastor Tom.



COMMUNITY CORNER

The next meeting of AAIC occurs March 3, at the First Congregational Church in Akron from 12:00-1:30. Bring a brown bag lunch.



The documentary film HESBURGH will be shown at the downtown library on Sunday, March 29, from 1:30-3:00. A year ago this film was nominated for best picture (documentary) at the Academy Awards. The film highlights the role of faith leaders in social justice. AAIC is partnering with the library on this activity.

In the planning stages is a program by Josh Gippin on nuns, millennials, agnostics, etc. on how they view organized religion and what this may mean for our churches. This program should be a must-see for all people of faith and their spiritual leaders.

That program is tied to the free screening of SISTER, by Josh Gippin,. The film follows the life of Sister Catherine Walsh and her work with immigrants. The film will be shown Tuesday, March 3, 4:00 pm, at Myers School of Art at the University of Akron.

Once again, the 2020 Hunger Walks are in the forefront of our planning as well as a future celebration/program on the 40th anniversary of AAIC.

—Nancy Williams

Facilities Committee Update



Facilities Organizes — Thanks to Tim Meyer, our liaison with the Governing Board, we have a list of emergency contacts when something goes wrong with the building. When it is complete, copies will be given to the office and to members of the Facilities Committee.

Tim is also preparing a comprehensive list of needed repairs and improvements to guide our work in the future. High on the list is the parking lot which is deteriorating badly.

Ken Williams, Facilities Chair

Election Day Bake Sale

On Primary Election Day, March 17, our church will host voters as an official polling location. Because this is a presidential primary, voter turnout is expected to be very high. That means this will be a great opportunity to raise money with a bake sale.

We need items in labeled, ziplock bags such as 4 muffins, 6 cookies, 4 pieces of coffee cake, etc. Sign the sheet on the hall table if you are willing to contribute. You may bring the items to the kitchen on Sunday, March 15 before the service, or Monday (3/16) between 10-11 a.m. All proceeds will be used to buy books for the two book fairs sponsored by the Missions Committee on May 12 and 21.

Easter is Sunday, April 12.

We need four people to work on an expanded Coffee Hour/ Easter breakfast to be held in Fellowship Hall beginning at 9:30. Please sign the sheet on the hall table.

