



Centenary United Methodist Church

PO Box 111

82 S. Hancock St.

Pentwater, MI 49449

The Circuit Rider

JANUARY 2024



Centenary United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Vaughn W. Thurston-Cox, Pastor



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Scan to connect to
CUMC Facebook news

Our Vision: To be the Breath of God in Community

Our Values: Loving God, Serving Others, Welcoming All

Circuit Rider



The Pastor's Pen

Rev. Dr. Vaughn Thurston-Cox

**Hudsonville, MI, 1975. Jamestown, ND, 1978.
Athens, AL, 1986.**

I understand the life to which the Spirit called me and which I chose as pastor within the United Methodist Church. As ordained elders we make our vows to the itinerant life and are reminded of that vow each year. We go to the place our bishop sees our gifts are most needed, which we always hope moves us closer to our family, but wherever we go grace meets us. I have enjoyed the graces of both the quiet countryside and bustling cultural centers since I

began this journey some twenty years ago. I was born into it.

Zeeland, MI, 1992. Allendale, MI, 1996.

My father spent his life working as a metallurgical engineer for military contractors through most of the Cold War and then into the War on Terror. We weren't a military family; we weren't posted; but our lives were always military adjacent. We went wherever Congress happened to be sending its military-aerospace dollars at the time. When we arrived in Athens, outside Rocket City USA and Redstone Arsenal, we never imagined needing to move again. He'd arrived. All the jobs he might ever want were right there, until the Iron Curtain fell, and they weren't.

Wilmore, KY, 2000. Leroy, MI, 2003.

And maybe it sounds strange, but I'm grateful for this life. There was so much grace in growing up like I did. My world was never small. It was always bigger than my own little neck of the woods. We travelled to places like the Rockies, Canada, the American Southwest, and Mexico. That experience made me curious and gave me a certain insight into my own perspectives on the world around me. What I might've lost in not growing up in the same place surrounded by the same people at the same school, I received back in creative experience.

Boswell, IN, 2005. Big Rapids, MI 2006. Petoskey, MI, 2010.

But it can be hard. I spent so much of my life as the new kid, the person who didn't quite belong. I vividly remember one kid in fifth grade glaring at me before pointing and calling me some Yankee. I'd never heard the word before that and thought it must be something awful given look on his face. And I get it. I didn't talk like him, and I don't today. His family still flew the Stars and Bars, and

The Pastor's Pen *continued from page 2*

my grandparents going back fought under the Stars and Stripes. Athens was changing. It wasn't the Athens it had always been. People like my father were moving there and driving into the city, and, while they welcomed all the money it meant in their tills, they just wished we didn't happen to be attached to it. But understanding didn't make it easier or right. The discipline of community, specifically of welcome and hospitality, always means making room for change, because we cannot welcome others and not be changed in some way by them.

Sunfield, MI, 2016. Grand Ledge, MI, 2017.

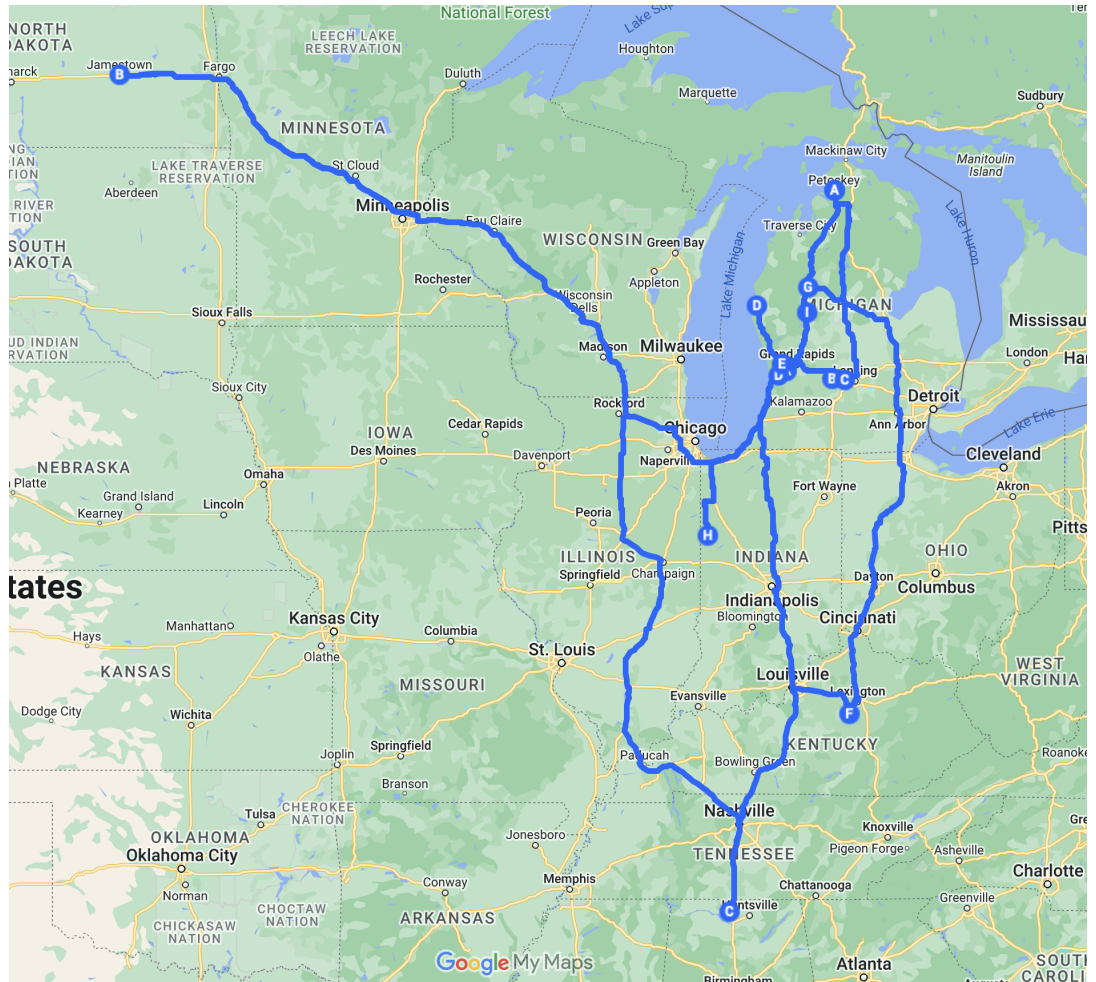
I am grateful for a place like Centenary United Methodist, where my family has been welcomed and made to feel that we belong, exchange students and all. We live in what one person here calls a chosen place. People come here from Detroit, from Grand Rapids, from Chicago, from San Francisco, to make a new home for themselves, bringing all their history and experience with them. And that means we are always a community in the midst of change, making room for new neighbors and new voices. Many of them don't go to the store looking for pop or drink Vernors or have any idea where they might see Big Red, but they are welcome here too. That's what it means to practice the discipline of community as the people of God, to embrace the kind of welcome the moves from us and them to us together. And isn't that the very welcome we receive in Christ? Once

strangers, now friends. Once orphans, now the children of our Abba Father. It can be hard. We like the way things are, or they wouldn't be that way. At the same time, God's blessing waits for us in the gifts of the newcomer. As the new kid who has spent his life moving from place to place, places like Centenary have made all the difference in the world for me. It's how we become home for others.

Pentwater, MI, 2021.

Be the Breath,

Pastor Vaughn





“Whoever wants to be leader among you must be your servant.”

- Matthew 20-26

As the New Year arrives the opportunity is here to reflect on what was accomplished as CUMC reaches out to be the Breath of God in the community. I have been blessed to be the chair of the Church Council for the past two

years. It is great to have worked with a group that is dedicated to leading our church to move ahead in doing God’s work and reaching out to the community. It is wonderful to be part of the leadership of the congregation that makes things happen in our church.

I would like to talk about that leadership I see at work in our church. Matthew 20-26 speaks of leadership as being a servant: “But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be leader among you must be your servant.” The Council serves to support the development of policies and the “big picture” of the church. One accomplishment of the Council has been the identification of the Values of CUMC. We now use on a regular basis the values of Loving God, Serving Others, and Welcoming All.

The Council is helpful as it supports the various Ministries of the Church. These hard working teams get the job of God’s work done on a daily basis. One group that is always there for the people of Centenary is the work of hospitality. From planning a funeral luncheon to organizing coffee hour fellowship hospitality takes care of the needs that arise in the congregation. I can name many Ministries that accomplish so much here in our church: Property Management, United Women in Faith, Prayers and Squares, Centenary Cares, The Worship Team, Finance and Operations, Program Coordination, Community Dinners and more get the work done at Centenary. Many individuals and teams pick up when there is a need here in our church. I appreciate Senior Stretch, as a way to come together, church members and community enjoying a positive, healthy activity. Decorating for the holidays is another perfect example of a group of people getting together and doing the needed work.

I am humbled and grateful for all the leadership that makes this a wonderful church where God’s work is accomplished. I am inspired as it is written, “Even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 20:28

Quiet Corner - The Work of Christmas Begins

As you pack up your decorations, consider how you will continue the Christmas spirit all year round, with these thoughts of Howard Thurman in his poem:

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others, to make music in the heart.



(Speaking of music, many thanks to the Centenary Worship Team and all the musicians who shared their time, talents, and love with all of us over Christmastime—what a blessing you are to our congregation and our village. You helped make Christmas in Pentwater so very special.)

Entering the New Year 2024

God of all time, help us enter the New Year quietly,
thoughtful of who we are to ourselves and to others,
mindful that our steps make an impact and our words carry power.
May we walk gently. May we speak only after we have listened well.
Creator of all life, help us enter the New Year reverently,
aware that you have endowed every creature, and plant,
every person and habitat with beauty and purpose.
May we regard the world with tenderness.
May we honor rather than destroy.
Lover of all souls, help us enter the New Year joyfully,
willing to laugh and dance and dream,
remembering our many gifts with thanks
and looking forward to blessings yet to come.
May we welcome your lavish love.
May we cast off the small, vindictive god our fears have made.
May the grace and peace of Christ bless us now and in the days ahead.

- Vinita Hampton Wright

Thoughts and Prayers for a Praying Community - compiled by Sandy Lyon

The Value of Community Dinner in our Community

I am writing this on Thursday, December 14, and last night we hosted another great Community Dinner. We served baked chicken, rice pilaf, fruit salad, and broccoli cheddar soup to about 170 people. The volunteers were all in a good mood and we were happy to be there.

If you came to eat in the dining room on December 13, you saw that the tables were full and folks were talking and laughing. The servers cheerfully got the food out to the tables and then cleared. Our volunteers also faithfully worked to provide the much appreciated beverages and desserts. And the clean up crew left the kitchen in pristine shape as they always do. If you were there you might have wondered how Peggy Crum and I can say that we served 170 people when there were 9 tables of 7 chairs each with one seating. I was never good at math, but even I can see a problem here.

These numbers show the secret of how the Community Dinner works. We send meals to COVE and on the 13th, they had 30 people in residence. We provided a chicken dinner, plus another 30 meals from the freezer. There were about 55 carry out meals and 55 people who ate in the dining room. We also save any leftovers and freeze individual meals for people to take home. Each meal that we provide costs roughly \$2.50 and the donations that came in on the 13th just about covered the cost of 170 meals. To date the donations on average have covered the costs. And that, friends, is why the Community Dinner is not just for 'people in need'. To do the good works, we very much need people who can offer a free-will donation while enjoying a good dinner, meeting new friends, talking, and laughing.

If you haven't joined us for Community Dinner; please consider coming some night. Menus are posted on Facebook, the website, and the sign outside the Church. Come in to feed yourself and perhaps someone else as well.

Elaine Konyha



Community Dinner Menus For January*

January 3 Hoppin' John - Red Beans/Rice/Ham
Cornbread
Coleslaw
Turkey Barley Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

January 10 Shephard's Pie
Red Cabbage and Apples
Homemade Dinner Roll
Butternut Squash Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

January 17 Fluffy Whole Grain Pancakes
Strawberries, Syrup, Whipped Topping
Sausage Links
Applesauce sprinkled with Cinnamon
Minestrone Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

January 24 Bean and Cheese Enchilada
Mexican Rice
Marinated Vegetable Salad
Green Chile Soup or
Tortilla Soup Monterey
Delicious Donated Desserts

January 31 Spice-rubbed Baked Chicken
Baked Squash
Buttermilk Biscuit
Celery Walnut Salad
Cabbage Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

* Menus may change based on availability of food.
[Click here](#) for the current week's menu.

Program Coordination Team - Beginnings & Endings

Beginning a new year—no matter how much you look for a clean slate—means looking at an ending and honoring the accomplishments, the service, the hopes proposed, and dreams fulfilled.

It also means starting over. On January 9, the Program Coordination Team will be reviewing some of the vital work we do at Centenary:

- Advent Decorations
- Holiday Baskets
- Christmas by Candlelight

We look forward to hearing about the goals and accomplishment of this work:
The breathtaking beauty of the decorated sanctuary
The number of baskets and families assisted over the 40 plus years....generations
The twinkling lights of so many as the community gathers to begin the Advent Season.

Time to change with plenty of time to plan. When we come to the Fall of 2024, we will have renewed and possibly changed ministries.

It is time to talk. Program Coordination meets January 9th at 9:30 am. Come with your suggestions, comments, ideas, notes of praise, and thanks for what has been and what has yet to be. **All welcome!**

Anne Soles
Program Coordination Team





Volunteer to Set Up Communion

Looking for a new opportunity to serve the church by giving a small amount of time and talent? In 2024, the Worship Team will be posting a sign up sheet for preparing communion elements. The task involves cutting bread into cubes, pouring juice into communion ware, placing on the altar and cleanup after the service. There are written instructions available. Generally, communion is served on the first Sunday of each month. Please consider serving. Look for the [SignUp Genius dates](#) starting January!

Prayers & Squares

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone, the new is here!"

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

"A light has dawned." - Isaiah 9:2

These words from Scripture capture, for me, a sense of optimism and joyous anticipation that is held in potential for this new year. At the beginning of the verse by Isaiah he refers to "the people who walked and lived in deep darkness". It seems that 2023 held moments of 'darkness' for many. We who are involved in Prayers & Squares were 'up close and personal' to many heartbreaking situations. And, the instances of conflict and turmoil that were evidenced in the world seemed overwhelming.

Yet, there were always echoes of goodness throughout the year...little reminders of 'God at work'. The scrapbook that we keep of people who've received prayer quilts is filled with happy, peaceful, grateful faces. Of those who passed on to eternal life, there is little doubt that they spent their final days on earth knowing they were held in love. So, as I "lift up my eyes, and see that the fields are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35) I am hopeful that there are good things to come.



Jean Woodley holding her beautiful quilt.



Tying prayers into Jean Russell's quilt.

We ended the year giving quilts to Don Palmer (who underwent heart surgery in December), Jean Russel (in hospital for lung issues) and Jackie Woodley (for a new kidney for herself as well as family needs). We also gave quilts to two female residents at The Oceana Medical Facility at the request of the Pentwater Garden Club. As we enter 2024, we are 'in production' for more quilts that have been requested. And we continue to be nourished by our great teamwork and affectionate camaraderie!

At the beginning of each new year I like to take a moment and give homage to the unsung heroes of our ministry. These include, of course, our fearless leader Kristen Forester as well as other seasoned

Prayers & Squares *continued from page 8*

quilters who are part of our group...but also some who did not 'come to the table' with sewing skills yet have contributed in such wonderful ways! It's an honor to be a shared "breath of God" with these folks. I look forward to discovering how our ministry continues to unfold in 2024.

I'd like to end this article with a quote from Theresa of Avila that both comforts me and inspires me to fasten my sight on a foundation that's strong and certain: "Find God in yourself, and find yourself in God."

Here's to a year of blessings for all.

Happy New Year!

Carrie Roberts



Don Palmer recovering from heart surgery



SignUpGenius

We are now using **Signup Genius** to sign up and serve in several ways. Please click on the links if you can share your time and talents with us!

[Community Dinner volunteers](#)

[Liturgist](#)

[Children's Time Leader](#)

[Hosting Fellowship Time](#)

[Ushers](#)

[Communion Set Up](#)

You can also sign up using our bulletin board.



Month of January 2024 at a Glance

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Office closed for New Year's	2 Circuit Rider Articles Due 9am - Community Dinner 1pm - PSC Board @ Wesley 2pm - Meditation Group @ 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley	3 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner	4 8am - PSC Caramel Corn @ 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @	5 9am - PSC Caramel Corn @ 10am - Prayers Squares @	6
7 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	8 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10:30am - Finance & Op's 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	9 9am - Community Dinner 9am - Prog Coord'n Team @ 9am - UnDeck the Halls 10:30am - Worship Team @ 1pm - Women's Club Quilt @ 6:30pm - Euchre @ Wesley 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	10 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music 6:30pm - Property	11 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 5:30pm - Business after	12 10am - Prayers Squares @	13
14 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	15 9am - Cargiver's Support 10am - Senior Stretch @	16 9am - Community Dinner 2pm - Meditation Group @ 6pm - Church Council @ 6pm - Council Zoom Link @ 6pm - West Michigan SAIL @ 6:30pm - euchre @	17 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music	18 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10am - Service Club @	19 10am - Prayers Squares @	20
21 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	22 10am - Senior Stretch @	23 9am - Community Dinner 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley	24 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music	25 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10am - Service Club @	26 10am - Prayers Squares @	27
28 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	29 Circuit Rider Articles Due 10am - Senior Stretch @	30 9am - Community Dinner 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley	31 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music			

For the most up to date schedule and details, go to pentwaterumc.org/calendar

Church Council Meeting Minutes

Centenary United Methodist Church November 28, 2023

In Attendance: Shannon Larson, Susan MacGregor, Mat Hacker, Sandy Lyon, Bart Zachrich, Gene Jankowski, David DeNolf, Elaine Konyha, Elaine Curtis, Pastor Vaughn Thurston-Cox, and via ZOOM George Van Scoyok, Patti Davidson and Beth Russell

The meeting was called to order with a prayer from Pastor Vaughn at 6:00 PM.

The agenda was presented with one change. Mat Hacker's presentation from Property was moved to the beginning of the meeting.

Mat Hacker made a presentation regarding an additional AED in the church. There was discussion and a motion made.

MOTION: Is the church willing to accept funds for a 2nd AED to be placed in or near the sanctuary? Pastor Vaughn made the motion. Sandy Lyon seconded the motion. VOTE: a "yes" vote passed unanimously

The minutes from October were presented and accepted by all.

Church Council goals were reviewed.

Goal #1: Bart Zachrich as council president has been reporting to the congregation on the Council meetings. The next report will be the Sunday after next. The Pastor is preparing to offer the course "Courageous Conversations" as a small group in the beginning of 2024. Council members can attend his course in person or via Zoom or can take the class online.

Goal #2: Each Ministry team will develop one Discipleship idea to work on in the coming year. Council discussed what discipleship was and a subcommittee will work on wording so that the ministry teams understand what is being asked. Some ideas that came up in discussion were:

- Listening to the people
- Acting out core beliefs in Christianity
- Walk the walk
- Demonstrate our beliefs
- Following the way of Christ

Continued on page 12

Church Council Meeting Minutes *continued from page 11*

Goal #3: Creating a procedural calendar. This is an ongoing effort. In January the Council will select a president and select a SPRC team. February will include discussion of Risk Management in the church and start a review process of policies and procedures.

Staff Evaluation and Compensation: Evaluations of staff were conducted in the fall of 2023. The recommendation of SPRC was to increase the compensation for Jerry Overla and Kyle Jansen.

Motion: Accept the recommended pay increases. Elaine Curtis made the motion. Shannon Larson seconded. VOTE passed unanimously.

Updating Church Policies and Procedures: Kyle prepared a list of policies and/or procedures that the church has currently. These need to be updated, deleted, or added. The list included:

- Finance (currently being rewritten)

- Operations (next on Finance and Operations team agenda)

- Records Retention

- Planned Giving

- Council: Ministry Team description, Facilities, Protection (including child protection and HR)

- Communications

- Computer use

- Facilities (rental request form has been updated. It could also include weddings, funerals, funeral luncheon and security.)

- Membership Secretary

- Fellowship Time

During discussion the Council added:

- Risk Management

- Social Media

- Structural Issues for example election of Directors of Education, Finance, Operations,

- Property and Community Dinner

After discussion it was agreed that these reviews should start during the February 2024 meeting.

Western Waters Budget proposal: Western Waters District has asked all the churches in the district to vote yes or no on their proposed budget. Pastor Vaughn presented the budget as it had been sent to him.

Motion: Approve the Western Waters Budget Pastor Vaughn made the motion. Beth Russell seconded. VOTE: approved unanimously

Church Council Meeting Minutes *continued from page 12*

Final thoughts: Review of 2023.

This evening is the final business meeting of the Church Council for 2023. We celebrated the hard work of 3 members who are leaving at the end of the year. They are Shannon Larson, Jean Russell and Patti Davidson.

Pastor Vaughn asked each of the members in attendance to speak about a grace that had come to them while being on the council. These are:

Seeing wisdom of colleagues on Council

Worked hard to get consensus.

To be a part of this group via Zoom while unable to attend

Thoughtfulness and richness

Leadership of our servant leaders, Kindness, Pleasant place to be

Very democratic and participate in God's work done.

Getting to know all the things going on in the Church.

Connection in the group.

Strong anchor for our ministry in Christ

Patience. I've learned so much.

Going forward: Next meeting will be at Jamesport in Ludington on December 19 at 5:30 pm.

Business After Hours planning meeting will be on December 12 at 9:00 am.

Chamber of Commerce "Business After Hours" will be January 11, 2024, from 5:30 – 7:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.





Friends & Family of Eileen Griffiths
Friends & family of Carol Oxford
Colby Overla
Jerry Overla
Adolph Kruger
Jean Russell
Jackie Woodley
Evelyn Jacks

Winter Vaughn
Bill Bluhm
Kaycee Bylsma

Cancer Treatments

Stan Rokita
Jeff Klein
Ronda Hamelen Jenkins
Cindy Williams
Ernie Beauvais
Dale Trierweiler
Richard Wild

*Names will remain on the list for four weeks and they can be resubmitted.
Please submit updates or corrections to the Pastor*



Birthdays

Keith Danielson	01/04
Dennis Voorheis	01/04
Lynn Zachrich	01/11
Vicki Poplstein	01/15
Chuck Kiefer	01/17
Richard St.Denis	01/19
Harry Raymond	01/22
Madeline Hamelen	01/24
Kadie Koehl	01/31
Ted Towl	01/31



Anniversaries

Norm & Sandy Lyon	01/15
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Help Us Grow: Give Electronically

Electronic gifts are fast and secure, and they reduce administrative costs, allowing more of every dollar to fund the important work we are called to do.

- Give anytime, anywhere to your favorite funds
- Schedule and manage recurring donations
- Make one-time donations to special appeals
- Pay for events, programs and other activities

If you would like to give electronically, visit our website or contact the church office.

GIVE PLUS⁺

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pentwaterumc.org/giving