



Centenary United Methodist Church

PO Box 111

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Pentwater, MI 49449

The Circuit Rider

APRIL 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

Resurrection isn't simply an event we remember from some far flung past or eagerly await in some distant future. It begins in Jesus and ripples out through all his people into the world to this day, until its work is done and all has been made new again. It's the light that breaks the night and banishes darkness until all becomes day. It is the already; and it is the not quite yet. Our only work is to leave our hiding places and hold ourselves in it until God's work in us is done.

That is why I -and the council- chose Courageous Conversations. It's a short small group study, just four sessions, but it gives us a way to hold our relationships with each other in the Light of Resurrection. To let God's light help us see something new in ourselves and our small fellowship, especially those things that keep us from having difficult conversations well, because no one needs to be taught how to do this badly. American politics reflects the vitriol and extremism we find almost everywhere, including our churches. We named the fears that keep us from naming the hard things and some of the forces that pit us against each other, because when we name something we take its power away. It is a simple, yet profound, way the leaders of this church seek resurrection in their lives and this community of faith. We don't quite know what might happen in Charlotte, but whatever happens we want to be the kind of people that breathe life into other instead of the people who strangle it.

Courageous Conversations

I've been asked by a few people how we can prepare for General Conference. The most important work is the work we do in ourselves. Whatever happens -and no one knows what will happen- we know goodness and mercy chase after us all the days of our lives. The best thing we can do is throw our arms up to God to receive that grace and then out to each other in offering to our neighbor, because, then, whatever happens we become goodness and mercy for each other. To that end we've printed a prayer guide for General Conference that started Tuesday, March 26, that will go out Sunday, March 31. I apologize for not getting it out sooner, here's the [link to the digital copy](#) you can also find the link on our Facebook page. The central matters of concern for delegates

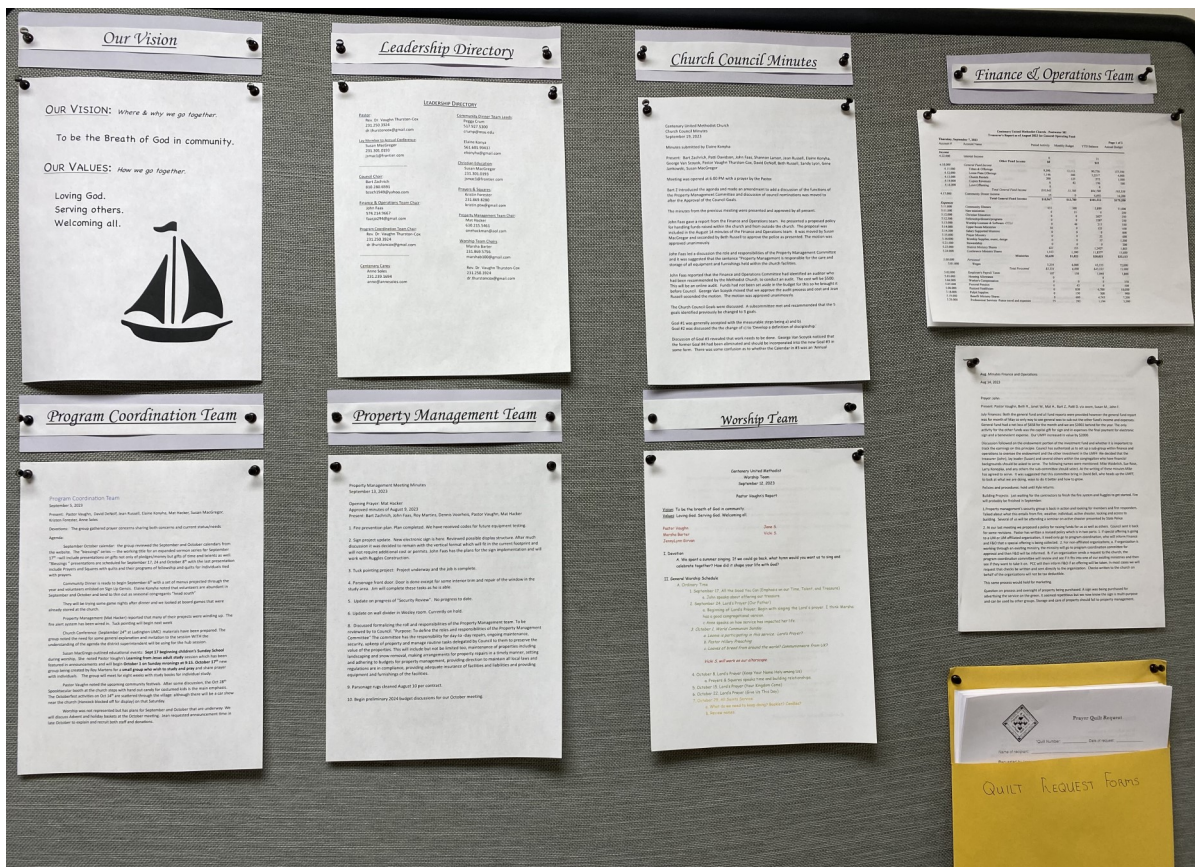
The Pastor's Pen *continued from page 2*

coming from the Michigan Annual Conference include: removal of harmful language currently lodged in the Book of Discipline and approving regionalization (A plan proposed by United Methodists in Africa and the Philippines, supported by our bishops and Connectional Table to give the United States the same flexibility they have in adapting specific portions of the Discipline.). The work will begin in 2024 and continue into 2026 and 2028 as the institutions are aligned to become more responsive and nimble.

I am grateful to be your pastor at this time in Methodist history. We are a church that has chosen to be both-and instead of either-or. I think that puts us somewhere special in Pentwater, a place that can truly welcome all. It is tremendous work to be about in a year where people are pit more and more against one another.

I will be away with family the week after Easter. In the great, ecumenical tradition of our church, Father Mick Shriver will provide pastoral care that week. His number is 231-233-7212. Thank you for being the breath of God in community for each other and for me!

Be the Breath, **Pastor Vaughn**



Are you interested in a specific ministry or the work of our church. Minutes for our Church Council, Finance & Operations, Worship, Program Coordination, and Property Management Teams are posted on the bulletin board outside the office. You can also request a copy of minutes at the church office.



How Big is the U.S. Gun Violence Epidemic?

In last month's article, I attempted to describe the U.S. gun violence problem and how we, as United Methodists, are asked to prayerfully reflect on a problem that is uniquely American and accounts for about 50,000 deaths per year, more than half by suicide. This month, I hope to quantify the problem and answer the question: Who owns guns and why do they own them?

While the U.S. is not the only country experiencing increased gun deaths, no other wealthy country comes close to the United States in terms of gun-related violence and deaths, where 3.96 people per 100,000 residents are killed each year with guns. By comparison, Canada's rate is .47 percent, eight times lower than that of the U.S. These are averages that belie places that drive the overall rate up. Washington, DC's rate, for example, is 18.5 percent, by far the highest in our country for any place. At 9.34 percent per 100,000 residents, Louisiana is the most dangerous state in the U.S.

By The Numbers

The U.S. is the largest maker and exporter of firearms and ammunition in the world, accounting for 40 percent of all global arms exports. America also has the highest rate of gun ownership at 32 percent. According to the Pew Research Center, two-thirds of all American gun owners own more than one gun; twenty-nine percent say they own five or more guns. Forty-four percent of all Americans say they live in a home where guns exist. By political party, 50 percent of republicans and 18 percent of democrats are gun owners. Thirty-eight percent of non-gun owners say they are open to owning a gun in the future. Men are twice as likely to own a gun than women, who are more likely to favor stricter gun laws. Whites are more likely to own a gun than are non-whites.

The U.S. is estimated to have 120 guns for every 100 persons.

Why Do So Many Americans Own Guns?

It's not a one-size fits all, but there is a coalescing around one reason. Three-quarters of U.S. gun owners cite protection as the major reason for the gun they own. In decades past, hunting and sport-shooting were the most cited reasons gun ownership, mostly long guns. Hunting and sport shooting now account for 32 and 30 percent respectively as the most cited reasons for owning a gun. Today, 71 percent of all guns in the U.S. are handguns.

Do Guns Make Us Safer?

Most gun owners, about 68 percent, say that owning a gun makes them feel safer. **According to federal statistics and the Pew Research Center, having a gun in your home makes you twice as likely to be a victim of homicide and triples the risk of suicide.**

Next month I will attempt to answer why so many Americans feel they need to have the ability to protect themselves and whether, or not, more guns equate to more gun violence.

Mark Trierweiler

Quiet Corner - Thoughts & Poems for a Praying Community

Going Home - Becoming Home

Dwelling in a space with others and the practice of lingering in place are the things that make home. Ultimately God is our home. God dwells with us and we in God. The ancient Hebrew prophet Isaiah spoke of Immanuel, “God with us,” as the promise of shelter and safety for Israel, one of themes that Christians later adopted for Jesus. Ultimately, physical houses go to ruin, but home is an ongoing spiritual promise. God has promised to never leave us. Home, a holy habitation, a sacred space.

- from Grounded by Diana Butler Bass

Mystical poet Gunilla Norris writes:

I leave the bedroom...I begin walking through my house. I will traverse it many times today like a creature covering her turf. It is a journey that zigzags and returns upon itself...a circumambulation...a re-remembering of place. I know this is the way many ancients prayed—circling a holy site to deepen their devotion. The floor in this house is wood...wide, old boards. When I walk I am walking on the wood and in the woods. I am walking on the life of these trees. They have been cut and planed...offered up for this sheltering. My foot falls. The ground rises to meet it. A holy, ordinary moment is repeating itself. All the time I am meeting and being met like this. Your whole creation is ground. Help me to remember that in this mutuality we can become home for each other. You are asking us slowly to become Your holy site.

Somehow we keep searching for home, looking for a safe haven to reside and return. Then the old hymn sneaks up:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

“The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

- Maya Angelou



“The mystical heart knows there is a fellow Fisherman nearby who is always available for good advice. He stands and beckons from the shore, at the edge of every ordinary life.”

- Richard Rohr

To Come Home to Yourself - *a blessing by John O'Donohue*

May all that is unforgiven in you be released. May your fears yield their deepest tranquilities. May all that is unloved in you blossom into a future graced with love.

Welcome Home! Compiled by Sandy Lyon

Prayers & Squares

*“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”
- John 15:8*

“Peace is joy at rest, and joy is peace on its feet.” - Anne Lamont

“April showers bring May flowers.” This is an old saying that I repeat to myself when I find the rainy days of this month starting to get to me. It’s hard at times to see the light hidden in these dark times. Yet, if we can learn to trust our own Divine nature it will naturally lead us to a place of peace and joy. And a recognition that the world of appearances is not the Truth. God is.

The quote from John 15:8 is, for me, a reminder that as we allow an infusion of God-light...in part by choosing to imagine “the flowers” that await, and in part by simply “resting” in faith...we become (on a real level) God’s disciples. Because we are energized, then, to “bear fruit”.

There are all sorts of ways one can bear fruit. And it looks different for everyone so it’s a waste of



P&S Team sorting fabric donated by Louise Sanford

time to compare. But, a fairly reliable ‘marker’ is the energy of joy (“peace on its feet”). I was inspired to take a few pics of our group busy at work sorting through and organizing a generous donation of fabric from Diane Sanford’s mom, who is currently in Hospice care. To see the “fruit” of God’s provision in full form was uplifting!

Another example of fruit-bearing is demonstrated by the sweet pic sent by Jeanne Oakes, Linda Trierweiler’s sister-in-law, who received a quilt from us last month. Even her cat got in on the love and comfort of our prayers!

So, it is truly with a full heart that I wish you a peaceful, joyful...and fertile April. And as we consider our True provision of fruit and light this Sunday, Happy Easter!



Jeanne Oakes’ cat enjoying her quilt.

Be Blessed - **Carrie Roberts**

Laity see “Resurrection Energy” in the Future of the Church

In this third article exploring the future of the church, leading laity point to signs of rebirth within the United Methodist Church in Michigan and beyond.

JOHN E. HARNISH,
Michigan Conference
Communications

“Resurrection energy!” Elizabeth Jowski took part in a recent conversation with laity about the future of the church. She said, “What I am noticing is this resurrection energy. It feels like we’ve seen death, but out of death comes new life. That’s what Jesus shows us, and that’s what we are seeing.”



The conversation was the third in a series inviting Michigan United Methodists to share their hopes for the future. Two previous conversations included diverse groups of pastors, particularly younger clergy, who will lead the church into the future. Read [the first article](#) in the series. Read [the second article](#).

Seeing Signs of Hope: In sharing signs of hope, participants brought updates from their respective congregations.

Sherman Louis, lay minister at Detroit: Metropolitan UMC, highlighted the growth of the online audience and their [5 O’clock Rush](#) series, a music ministry that attracts the community to a time of music and monthly communion. “We encounter all kinds of people when we invite them into the church,” he said. “Then we allow God to guide their hearts and do what God does best.”

At Ishpeming: Wesley UMC, Gordon Grigg said there is a renewed vitality inspired by the appointment of a new pastor and their success in reaching around a hundred people each week through live-streamed services.

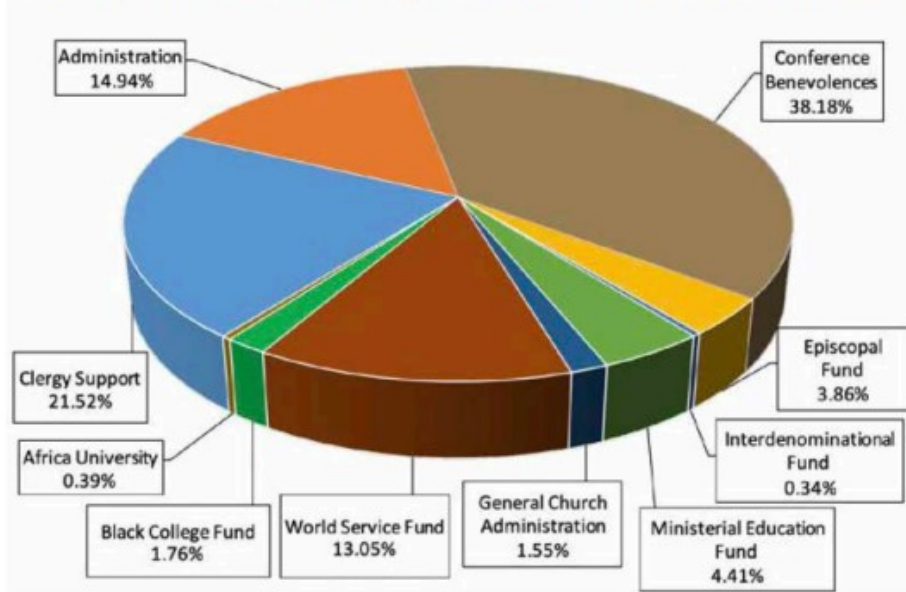
Jen Peters shares a unique perspective as the facilitator for the Michigan Annual Conference, a General Conference delegate, and the spouse of the pastor at Court Street UMC in Flint. The Court Street congregation has been focused on defining its identity, particularly its commitment to full inclusion, and today, they are attracting new members.

Across the nation, every denomination has seen a significant drop in participation, referred to by some as the [“dechurching of America.”](#) The shift started before COVID-19, but the pandemic exacerbated it. In addition, United Methodism has dealt with the discord caused by the disaffiliation of some churches. Even in the face of these realities, a recent report shows that almost [84% of churches in the Michigan Conference are committed to remaining United Methodist](#). “Resurrection energy” can be found in local churches throughout the state.

[Follow this link](#) to read the full article.

Conference Ministry Shares

Michigan United Methodists approved at annual conference how gifts will be used to support mission and ministry in Michigan and around the world in 2020



Centenary is faithful in contributing 100% of our Conference Ministry Shares.

These funds make up approximately 75% of the Conference Budget which provide resources and services to local churches and their members and operate the conference.

You can find more information with this link: [Ministry Shares and how we share.](#)



Community Dinner Menus For April*

April 3 Fluffy Whole Grain Pancakes
Strawberries, Syrup, Whipped Topping
Sausage Links
Applesauce sprinkled with Cinnamon
Minestrone Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

April 10 Spice-rubbed Baked Chicken
Mashed Butternut Squash
Buttermilk Biscuit
Celery Walnut Salad
Cabbage Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

April 17 Spaghetti and Homemade Meat Sauce
Garlic Bread
Italian Garbanzo Bean Salad
Pasta Fagioli Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts

April 24 Pork Loin
Au Gratin Potatoes
Buttered Green Beans
Waldorf Salad
Tomato Soup
Delicious Donated Desserts



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

Childbirth, then and now - United Mission to Nepal

Recently, Les came home from the hospital very pleased with what he had done. So – I asked him what had happened that was making him so happy! He told me he had successfully done an External Cephalic Version. I asked him to explain, and then to write about it. Here is what Les wrote:

“Early in pregnancy, the tiny little baby has a lot of room to move around in the womb, and is constantly flipping over. But by the end of the pregnancy, most babies settle into the head down position, and they are born head first, or by vertex (or cephalic) presentation. A few babies, for various reasons, settle into the head up or breech position. Babies can still be born normally by breech, and most of the time there is no problem, but the risk of a complication is slightly higher than for a vertex baby. It is easy to understand how doctors and nurses can shy away from recommending a vaginal delivery for a breech baby, especially if they have experienced a baby in breech that had a complication. During our 18 months away from Tansen, the practice had gradually drifted towards doing a caesarean section for any breech baby, but especially for first babies. Skills and confidence to conduct a breech delivery were gradually being lost.



But there is an alternative. Some babies can be turned from breech to vertex using manual pressure through the mother’s abdominal wall. The timing is critical. If done too early, they baby will just flip back, but waiting too long means the baby is larger, and less likely to turn. 35 weeks is the ideal time. There also needs to be an adequate amount of fluid so the baby has room to flip.

Several weeks ago, I was consulted about a breech baby. The baby was already at 38 weeks, so a bit after the best time to try to turn him or her, but there was still enough amniotic fluid that I thought it was worth the try, so we could increase the chances that this baby could be born normally. With the help of one of our junior doctors (who was wide eyed and not very much help!) I was able to get the baby turned to vertex. The mom had to put up with a good amount of discomfort from all the pushing and twisting. But mom and baby were in good shape after the procedure, and went home. The following week she came back with normal labor pains, and as the baby had stayed in the vertex position, she had a normal healthy delivery!

While I (Debbie) was still thinking about this way of making sure babies are born safely here, I invited a group of the retired house helpers to come for a gathering – just to enjoy time together. I asked them to share with me where they had been born. (I expected to hear things like “at home”, “in a tea shop on the way to the hospital” or “at the hospital”. Out of the dozen women there, more than half gave me the unexpected answer of “in the cow shed”! (I was so surprised – but I remember saying – “You have something in common with Jesus – born in a cattle shed!”) For various reasons in Nepal, there are places where women are not allowed to give birth – and that was especially true 50 years ago or more. Although, even these days, there are too many women who die in childbirth often due to preventable causes – and who could have been saved if they had been in a hospital. We are thankful that here in our district of Palpa over 90% of babies are now delivered in a hospital. And – I was very thankful that all of these lovely older women who had served so many missionaries here in Tansen over the years survived their difficult birth environments and were such gifts to so many!

Love, Les and Debbie

Also – if you have an interest, we are writing our blog again about once a month. If you go to this link,

<https://dornonepalmission.wordpress.com/> you can sign

up to get it delivered into your inbox. Thanks for taking time to read our news!



Month of April 2024 at a Glance

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 10am - Senior Stretch @ 2pm - Meditation Group @	2 9am - Community Dinner 10:30am - Prog Coord'n 1pm - PSC Board @ Wesley 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley	3 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music	4 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10am - Service Club @ 7pm - Transforming Grace	5 10am - Prayers Squares @	6
7 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	8 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10:30am - Finance & Op's 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	9 9am - Community Dinner 10:30am - Worship Team @ 6:30pm - Euchre @ Wesley	10 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music 6:30pm - Property	11 5:30am - Audobon @ 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 7pm - Jr. Women's Club @ 7pm - Transforming Grace	12 10am - Prayers Squares @ 4pm - Set-up PEO-MI Chtr	13 8am - PEO-Michigan Chapter
14 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	15 9am - Cargiver's Support 10am - Senior Stretch @ 2pm - Meditation Group @ 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	16 9am - Community Dinner 12:30pm - Garden Club @ 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 9am - Ministry Workshop @
21 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 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	29 Circuit Rider Articles Due 10am - Senior Stretch @	30 9am - Community Dinner				

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

The Worship Team is looking for someone who may be interested in enriching worship through the visual arts.

- ◆ Banners?
- ◆ Altarscapes?
- ◆ Moving Power Point slides?
- ◆ Pictures?
- ◆ Or maybe something we haven't dreamed up yet.

If that sounds like you, please contact Marsha Barter, marshab100@gmail.com, 231-869-5756.

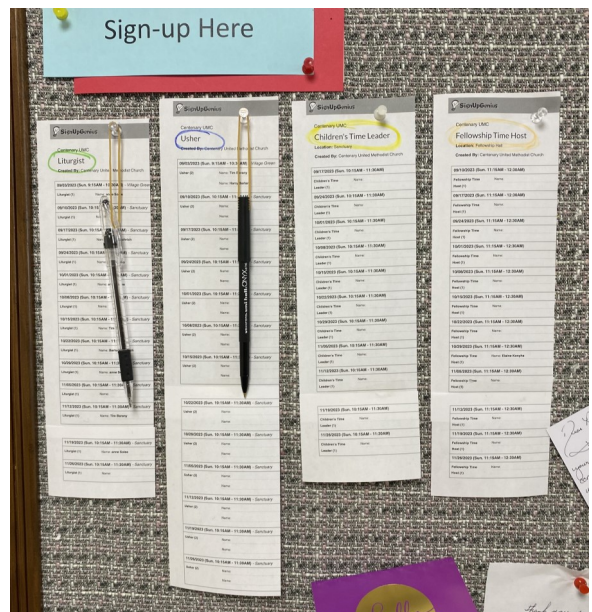




We are now using **SignUp Genius** to sign up and serve in several ways. Please click on the links if you can share your time and talents with us!

- [Community Dinner volunteers](#)
- [Liturgist](#)
- [Children's Time Leader](#)
- [Hosting Fellowship Time](#)
- [Ushers](#)
- [Communion Set Up](#)

You can also sign up using our bulletin board.





Friends & Family
of Diane Carlson
Chance, Anna Helms
& newborn Izzy
Dan Kelly
Louise Sanford
Luane Butterfield (Craig Larson's
grandmother)
Richard Bieri, (Nancy DeNolf's father)

Cancer Treatments

Paula Highland (friend of Shannon Larson)
Savannah (Girvan's niece)
Monica Daniels
Susan Defrites
Norb Capistrant
Jeff Klein
Ronda Hamelen Jenkins
Cindy Williams
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

Susan Hacker	04/01
Diane Gardy	04/03
Ralph Kayler	04/04
Mary Carpenter	04/08
Susan Hall	04/11
Linda Sloughter	04/12
Norm Lyon	04/12
Jerry Overla	04/15
Tim Barany	04/17
Anne Soles	04/17
Sue Johnson	04/20
Dave DeNolf	04/28
JR Overla	04/28
Betty Johnson	04/29



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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.



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pentwaterumc.org/giving