



# News From The Rock

February 2015

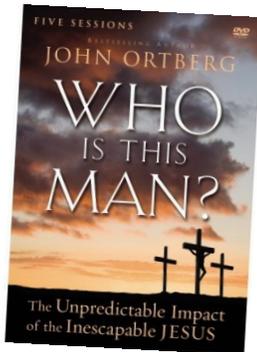
Solid Rock United Methodist Church • Warren, Indiana

## Lenten study series begins February 22

The 2015 Solid Rock Lenten Study Series will begin on Sunday, February 22, at 6:00 p.m. and continue for five weeks. This year's study is "Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact Of The Inescapable Jesus" by John Ortberg.

According to the publisher, in this study John Ortberg "reveals how Jesus made an inescapable influence on our world and how you can too.

"Jesus is history's most familiar figure. His impact on the world is immense and non-accidental. From the Dark Ages to Post-Modernity he is the man who won't go away.



"And yet ... He did not brashly defend his movement in the spirit of a rising political or military leader. He did not lay out a case that history would judge superior in all future books. He did not start by telling his disciples, 'Here are proofs of my divinity; affirm them and I'll accept you.'

"Who Is This Man?" illustrates how Jesus' influence has swept over history, bringing his inspiration to the evolution of art, science, government, medicine, and education. And how his vision for us to lead lives of dignity, compassion, forgiveness, and hope continues to inspire and challenge humanity today."

Study sessions include:

- February 22: "The Man Who Won't Go Away"
- March 1: "A Revolution of Humanity"
- March 8: "The Power of Forgiveness"
- March 15: "Why It's a Small World After All"
- March 22: "Three Days That Changed the World"

All are invited to attend.

## New adult Sunday morning study

Join the study group in the kitchen on Sunday mornings beginning February 15, as we study "24 Hours That Changed the World." Adam Hamilton takes us to the Holy Land and provides a deeper understanding of the most amazing day in history. We will visit the sites where those earth-shaking events took place as we walk where Jesus walked along the road that led to the pain and triumph of the cross.

## Kroger Cards

If you would like to be a part of the Kroger fundraiser reward program, please sign up at the church. You will need to call the church office and give Norma Smith the number from your Kroger Plus card. Every time you swipe your Kroger Card, Kroger will donate 3% of the sale to Solid Rock. This is an easy way to help our church. The 3% is a donation from the Kroger Company.



## Building Fund Update

The Finance Committee recently determined that no new projects will be financed through the building loan. From this point forward, all monies received into the Building Fund will be used only for payment on the existing loan. The current loan balance is approximately \$274,500. Individuals wishing to contribute to a specific project should direct their giving to the church trustees.

## Just Leaning on the Rock!

by Pastor Kathy Newton



*"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

*"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love Them."*

As we celebrate the month of February and Valentine's Day, I felt it fitting to talk a bit about the love Jesus instructs us to

***"...as a child of God I am to emulate the one who saved me"***

have. Above you'll see two verses the disciples received. Admittedly it is sometimes easy to love those you profess to love. There are times

when even that is difficult but here Jesus tells us, His modern day disciples, to love our enemies and to love those who hate us. My response would be, "Are you kidding me? Lord you want me to love those who don't even like me? Can we talk?"

Jesus, later in Luke, explains why this is important. We as redeemed children of God must strive to be better people than sinners. I know, you've heard me call myself chief of all sinners and indeed I am. However, as a child of God I am to emulate the one who saved me. Therefore I must love those who seem unlovable to me. I must love those who refuse to love others. I am expected to love those who do not love me. So in light of the Hallmark holiday of love, think on Jesus' definition of love and join me as I strive to show Jesus' love to ALL.

Shalom,  
Kathy

## December Financial Update

General Offerings .....	\$21,769
General Fund Expenses .....	\$18,209

## Youth Fellowship

UMYF will be making and selling pizzas for Super Bowl Sunday. Please see a youth member to order your pizza!

This winter we are talking about "Staying Free." In January we discussed dealing with failure.



Three key points: 1. Failure is a common experience, 2. How you respond to failure matters, 3. Failure can push you towards a deeper faith. Our chal-

lenge verse was Psalm 73:26. Read it along with the kids this month.

We invite your prayers as several of our youth have begun their final semester of high school. Please pray for Walker, Quintin, and Brooke as they look forward to graduation this spring, and also deal with decisions about college and the future!

### News From The Rock

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[www.solidrockumc.com](http://www.solidrockumc.com)

#### Worship Schedule

Sunday School at 9:00  
Worship at 10:00  
at 485 Bennett Drive, Warren  
Church Phone: 375-3871

#### Church Office

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Hours: 9 a.m. to Noon

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News deadline for the March  
newsletter: February 23

Our next meeting will be on February 15 from 6:45-8:15. UMYF is for all youth in grades 6-13. Please come join us and bring a friend!

### Upcoming Events

- **February 1:** Super Bowl Pizzas after church
- **February 9:** Pizza after church at East of Chicago
- **February 15:** Meeting at 6:45
- **March 1:** Meeting at 6:45
- **March 8:** Pizza after church at East of Chicago
- **March 15:** Meeting at 6:45

### Recordings of services available

Worship services at Solid Rock are recorded on DVD. To borrow or purchase a copy, contact the church office.

### Mission of the United Methodist Church

The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us. The United Methodist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all. As we make disciples, we respect persons of all religious faiths and we defend religious freedom for all persons. Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (28:19-20), and "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (22:37, 39).

This mission is our grace-filled response to the Reign of God in the world announced by Jesus. God's grace is active everywhere, at all times, carrying out this purpose as revealed in the Bible. It is expressed in God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah, in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and in the ministry of the prophets. It is fully embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is experienced

in the ongoing creation of a new people by the Holy Spirit.

John Wesley, Phillip Otterbein, Jacob Albright, and our other spiritual forebears understood this mission in this way. Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world. In order to be truly alive, we embrace Jesus' mandate to love God and to love our neighbor and to make disciples of all peoples.

We make disciples as we:

- Proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ;
- Lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
- Nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley's Christian conferencing;
- Send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and
- Continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.

- [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)

### Laws or love?

Businessman John Barrier, unrecognizable in jeans and a T-shirt, cashed a check at his longtime bank. But the teller refused to validate his parking ticket, saying Barrier hadn't made an official transaction. A manager agreed, saying rules were rules.

Barrier then performed a major transaction: withdrawing \$1 million and taking it elsewhere. He got his parking ticket validated after all.

What a great illustration of the perils of legalism, when man-made laws become more important than people. Jesus repeatedly healed and "worked" on the Sabbath, much to the dismay of religious leaders. He was concerned about people's hearts, not their appearance.

What matters more to you: laws or love? appearance or substance? A heart examination may be in order!



## Transforming disciple-making through the FCJ

"We're always implementing things as a congregation, that's nothing new," said the Reverend Mark Ellcessor, senior pastor of The Compass United Methodist Church, formerly Selma UMC until January 1 of this year. "But we didn't have a strategic way of making disciples – Fruitful Congregation Journey (FCJ) put that on the front burner." "FCJ really helped us focus on what we were doing," said Mike Richardson, The Compass' single board chair. "Instead of a shotgun approach it gave us more of a rifle. It focused us on our mission, and Dan Glover (The Compass' FCJ coach) brought a lot of love and compassion to the process."



And that is exactly what the Indiana Conference Church Development team wants FCJ to accomplish.

"Fruitful Congregation Journey isn't really a church-growth program, though many churches will experience growth," said Ed Fenstermacher, associate director for church development. "It's designed to help congregations become more effective in carrying out the mission of the church, which is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

FCJ is a team-based discovery process that helps churches to more effectively carry out their ministry.

Its design comes from the work of Paul Borden, who helped turn around the American Baptist Church in northern California in the 1990s. The process was developed by the Missouri Annual Conference, which has been actively using it and perfecting it for nearly 10 years. In Missouri, 80 percent of the churches that have been in the process for at least 18 months have experienced an increase in their average worship attendance. Half of the churches have grown by 5 percent or more.

FCJ is now spreading to other United Methodist conferences, including the Indiana Conference. The first Indiana congregations began their journey in 2010. Since then, 243 congregations have taken part or are now in the process.

FCJ is a three-step program that can last up to four years. The church development team works with the district superintendents to invite churches into the process, but Fenstermacher said that a church can always contact their district superintendent and request to be in the program.

While the process is not for churches in crisis or conflict, it is helpful for healthy

churches, as well as churches that are stuck or declining.

"It holds up a mirror to a dying church; they can no longer be in denial," he said. "They are forced to look at what may be painful next steps to move ahead in ministry."

That honest assessment of where a church is can be difficult, and may cause some churches to prefer the status quo. But Ellcessor cautions against that.

"One thing pastors have to overcome (in this process) is fear of exposure, fear of not measuring up in all the ways we worry about. But an honest assessment of ministry and how my church can better make disciples? Why wouldn't I want that?" he said.

In any case, FCJ allows churches to customize the directions and outcomes to fit their church's particular ministry context. "It is not a cookie-cutter approach," Fenstermacher said. "It is," he said, "for any church that is serious about making disciples of Jesus Christ."

The Compass has recently completed their 18-month FCJ process. With two campuses and their sights on a third, they are serious about making disciples. And while this all began before their Fruitful Congregation Journey, Ellcessor said, "FCJ forced us to bring everything together."

"FCJ really clarified our mission," he said. "We're embracing that. We are all called to make disciples, and we were doing that, but we didn't have a strategic, intentional way of doing it."

Fenstermacher said that even though the Missouri Conference points to increased attendance figures as a result of the program, it is too early to tell if those same results will hold true for Indiana, even though early numbers are promising. "Some numbers are going up, but we've only been in this for less than five years," he said "Those rises could be a statistical anomaly. We want to do statistical analysis five years down the road and look at attendance, profession of faith, those sorts of numbers."

But the church development team is enthusiastic about the program because of the many intangibles FCJ has brought about. "Churches that have gone through the process are more outward focused, more missional," Fenstermacher said. "The laity are empowered to move forward as active members, not just passive attendees. Churches streamline and simplify their structures and clarify their vision. Most importantly, FCJ churches are more intentionally pursuing their mission, becoming more outward focused and have clearer direction."

"To me, it's not just theory," Ellcessor said. "It's the bread and butter of who Jesus called us to be. His mandate is to do what he did: make followers. FCJ is a process of

seeing who we are as a church, and if you embrace that, you can change the world."

- www.incumc.org

## Staying fed

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103, NRSV).

Recently I was confronted with this question: If you fed yourself with food the way you feed yourself with God's Word, would you still be alive? It gave me pause.

Do I eat *enough* spiritually? — feast regularly enough on Scripture to keep up my energy and the health of my soul? Do I eat *nutritiously*? — take in a balanced meal of law and gospel, comfort and commandments, prophecy and promise? Do I pass up spiritual *junk food*? — set aside empty calories that lead to disease, in order to hunger for what truly gives life? Do I drink enough Living Water to avoid faith dehydration? And once in a while, do I *splurge on dessert*? — savor the sweetness and joy of belonging at God's table?

What abundance God sets before us. May we never skip a "meal"!



## What is Lent and why does it last forty days?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word *lencten*, which means "spring." The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent was a time to prepare new converts for baptism. Today, Christians focus on their relationship with God, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of themselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.



- www.umc.org

# Free Soup Supper

February 10  
5:00-6:30  
at Solid Rock



## God's love

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
were the whole sky of parchment made;  
were every stalk on earth a quill  
and every man a scribe by trade;  
to write the love of God above  
would drain the ocean dry;  
nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
though stretch'd from sky to sky.

—Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai  
(adapted modern version)

*Lord, help me to enjoy the common things of my  
everyday life.*

*I often find myself saying that nothing  
happened today,*

*when in fact the ordinary events of  
my life make a rich pattern,  
but they are so familiar I hardly  
notice them:*

*things like cups of tea and coffee*

*and meals shared with friends and colleagues;*

*or listening to favorite family stories*

*that we have heard and told so often.*

*Lord of Life, help me to recognize the joy of simple  
things.*



- Frank Topping



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