

News From The Rock

February 2021

Solid Rock United Methodist Church • Warren, Indiana

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Solid Rock COVID-19 Response

In their meeting on January 19, the Solid Rock Administrative Council made the difficult decision to extend the suspension of in-person worship through February 14. Several expressed how much they have missed the fellowship and corporate worship, and that the recorded services, while appreciated, are not an adequate replacement for in-person worship. Balanced against that was consideration of the infection rate as of January 19 in our county and state, and several personal accounts regarding the impact that the illness has had on individuals, families and friends. Also considered was that vaccines are now becoming available, and that given a few more weeks, a growing number of people in the community will develop protection from the virus. This decision was based on love of neighbor and desiring to do our part to protect our church family from a potentially dangerous illness.

The Solid Rock coronavirus response task force will meet on February 17 to discuss resuming in-person services on February 21. Please be in prayer for:

- Those who have been personally affected by the COVID-19 virus.
- Church staff as they respond to concerns that are voiced.
- Those who are working faithfully each week to provide alternate worship opportunities.
- Administrative Council and the task force as they discern God's leading.
- Solid Rock as we continue to explore new avenues of ministry in the community during a difficult season.
- What we may learn and how we may grow as we experience God's faithfulness in new and unexpected ways as He walks by our side through challenging times.

Sanctuary open for prayer and meditation

The Solid Rock sanctuary is now open Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., for prayer and meditation. Appropriate lighting and music are provided. Please enter through the office and let Jane know that you are present in the building.

Online Children's Sunday School

The Solid Rock UMC Online Children's Sunday school will continue through February. This is for all children ages preschool through grade 4. If your child, grandchild, niece, nephew, or neighbor would like a packet for this, please let the church office know at (260) 375-3873. Each Sunday includes a Bible story, crafts, experiments, songs, and prayer. The packet will include the materials for your child to do the activities at home along with the lesson. The lessons are listed on our church website at solidrockumc.com. You can find them using the Children's Online Sunday school link. Sunday school lessons can be watched on Sunday mornings or at any time during the week. Please help us share the good news of Jesus!



"We love because [God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NIV). Valentine's Day is fun, but I pray, God, that you show me how to share your love every day of the year.



When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment in the whole Bible, he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself." The first part, if I may be a bit glib, is easy. All you have to do is think for a while about how badly you messed up your life, and how miraculously God saved you, and you really can't help but love him. You can love him by yourself in the desert, like the ancient saints used to. Loving people while living in a world surrounded by them, on the other hand, is much harder. I would like to share with you an article I read several years ago that impacted my way of thinking on the matter.

The struggle to love our neighbor

Father Ronald Rolheiser, OMI | In Exile
June 24, 2016

"The most damaging idolatry is not the golden calf but enmity against the other." The renowned anthropologist, Rene Girard, wrote that and its truth is not easily admitted. Most of us like to believe that we are mature and big-hearted and that we do love our neighbors and are free of enmity towards others. But is this so?

In our more honest, more accurately perhaps, in our more humble moments, I think that all of us admit that we don't really love others in the way that Jesus asked. We don't turn the other cheek. We don't really love our enemies. We don't wish good to those who wish us harm. We don't bless those who curse us. And we

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Our Vision: Sharing and experiencing the life-giving message of Jesus, to restore wholeness and build an intentional community of hope, relationship, and purpose for everyone.

Alternative worship options

Alternative worship options during the suspension of in-person worship include:

- Links to prerecorded services are posted each Sunday morning on our website and Facebook page.
- This prerecorded service is broadcast on FM 87.9 to the parking lot Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.
- The sanctuary is open daily, Monday through Thursday, for prayer and meditation.

Additionally, you may request a printed copy of each week's sermon or a DVD of the prerecorded service. If you wish to take advantage of one of these options, please contact the church office at 375-3873.

News From The Rock

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Solid Rock United Methodist Church

P.O. Box 322

Warren, Indiana 46792

www.solidrockumc.com

Worship Schedule

Sunday School at 9:00 (temporarily suspended)

Worship at 10:00

at 485 Bennett Drive, Warren

Church Phone: 375-3871

Church Office

Office Phone: 375-3873

Monday - Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Closed Friday

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News deadline for the March newsletter: February 21

COVID-19 challenges Bread of Life Food Pantry

A nonprofit organization's success depends on volunteers and donors. Without dedicated volunteers, a nonprofit cannot be a consistent source of assistance to the community they would like to serve.

COVID-19 challenged volunteers to find procedures to stay safe as they performed their tasks.



Starting in March of 2020, "minimal contact" with patrons of the pantry was implemented.

The pantry would be drive-through only. Patrons would stay in their

vehicles. Volunteers would gather patron information in the drive-through. Food distribution would be prepackaged.

The pantry menu changed to general basic food items. Weekly distribution would focus on at least four fresh produce items, two protein items, continuing the "kids bags," and at least three minimal prep items. Volunteers put groceries in patrons' vehicles.

The number of families served weekly has doubled (some weeks tripled). The pantry has never run out of food, although sometimes we must substitute items to cover for changes in the amount available. The amount of food in a prepackaged box could prepare at least six meals, depending on the size of family and serving size.

The "kids bag" program continues to grow. Weekly we give out 125 to 150 bags. Each bag contains one box of cereal, two entrees, packaged fruit, a dessert item, and four snack items. Grocery stores have limited the amount of purchase of some items. We have never run out of products for this program.

December 2020 through February 2021, we will give a hygiene bag to each household. A supply bag contains dish soap, toilet paper, shampoo, bath soap, and toothpaste.

Donations have always been ample to meet the needs of patrons each week. Monetary donations have been very faithful. Covid has challenged purchasing products, but we are able to assist the number of patrons each week.

In July 2020, the pantry received a 8-

foot by 10-foot walk-in cooler. The cooler has opened opportunities to accept large donations of perishable items, and to purchase large quantities of quality menu items for the future week's distributions.

Our community was very generous with fresh produce donations this past season. Thank you. Families do appreciate your donations of home-grown food.

The Christmas assistance program procedures changed. Four volunteers monitored and distributed items. The clients came to the Christmas store by appointment only. We assisted 40 families, 108 children. Patrons picked out items they thought their family members would appreciate. Thanks you for the donation of items and financial assistance that enabled the pantry to give to each family participating.

Looking forward into 2021, volunteers will continue wearing face masks. The drive-through pantry will probably continue through the fall. Our goal is to be able to offer, in late spring, a personalized menu with drive-through, plus providing the prepackaged boxes of food items. We will resume passing out information flyers for patrons to be aware of programs or items that will be available to their families.

Thank you for caring about the Bread of Life Food Pantry. Thank you for sharing your time and monetary gifts to the pantry this past year. Thank you for helping the pantry fulfill its mission, "Neighbors Helping Neighbors."

—Rose Broyles

December Financial Update

General Fund Receipts.....	\$43,387
General Fund Expenses	\$23,481

Love bites!

Retailers eager to capture some of the \$20 billion that Americans spend every year for Valentine's Day gifts are moving beyond candy and flowers. For an outside-the-box edible present for that special someone, now you can purchase a bouquet of bacon roses, pickles or even Olive Garden breadsticks. If money is tight, you can visit Waffle House on February 14, the one night it takes reservations.

Last year, a most unusual Valentine's Day promotion had no takers. A reptile park in Mosca, Colorado, offered a two-for-one deal on gator-wrestling classes, but no one "snapped" up the opportunity. Maybe another heart-shaped box of chocolates isn't such a bad idea after all!

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don't genuinely forgive those who murder our loved ones.

We are decent, good-hearted persons, but persons whose heaven is still too predicated on needing an emotional vindication in the face of anyone or anything that opposes us. We can be fair, we can be just, but we don't yet love the way Jesus asked us to, that is, so that our love goes out to both those who love us and to those who hate us. We still struggle, mightily, mostly unsuccessfully, to wish our enemies well.

But for most of us who like to believe ourselves mature that battle remains hidden, mostly from ourselves. We tend to feel that we are loving and forgiving because, essentially, we are well-intentioned, sincere, and able to believe and say all the right things; but there's another part of us that isn't nearly so noble.

The Irish Jesuit, Michael Paul Gallagher, (who died recently and will be dearly missed) puts this well when he writes (In Extra Time): "You probably don't hate anyone, but you can be paralyzed by daily negatives. Mini-prejudices and knee-jerk judgments can produce a mood of undeclared war. Across barbed wire fences, invisible bullets fly." Loving the other as oneself, he submits, is for most of us an impossible uphill climb.

So where does that leave us? Serving out a life-sentence of mediocrity and hypocrisy? Professing to loving our enemies but not doing it? How can we profess to be Christians when, if we are honest, we have to admit that we are not measuring up to the litmus test of Christian discipleship, namely, loving and forgiving our enemies?

Perhaps we are not as bad as we think we are. If we are still struggling, we are still healthy. In making us, it seems, God factored in human complexity, human weakness, and how growing into deeper love is a lifelong journey. What can look like hypocrisy from the outside can, in fact, be a pilgrimage, a Camino walk, when seen within a fuller light of patience and understanding.

Thomas Aquinas, in speaking about union and intimacy, makes this important distinction. He distinguishes between being in union with something or somebody in actuality and being in union with that someone or something through desire. This has many applications but, applied in this case; it means that sometimes the heart can only go somewhere through desire rather than in actuality.

We can believe in the right things and

want the right things and still not be able to bring our hearts inside. One example of this is what the old catechisms (in their unique wisdom) used to call "imperfect contrition," that is, the notion that if you have done something wrong that you know is wrong and that you know that you should feel sorry for, but you can't, in fact, feel sorry for, then if you can wish that you could feel sorry, that's contrition enough, not perfect, but enough. It's the best you can do and it puts you at the right place at the level of desire, not a perfect place, but one better than its alternative.

And that "imperfect" place does more for us than simply providing the minimal standard of contrition needed for forgiveness. More importantly, it accords rightful dignity to whom and to what we have hurt.

Reflecting on our inability to genuinely love our neighbor, Marilynne Robinson submits that, even in our failure to live up to what Jesus asks of us, if we are struggling honestly, there is some virtue. She argues this way: Freud said that we cannot love our neighbor as ourselves, and no doubt this is true. But since we accept the reality that lies behind the commandment, that our neighbor is as worthy of love as ourselves, then in our very attempt to act on Jesus' demand we are acknowledging that our neighbor is worthy of love even if, at this point in our lives, we are too weak to provide it.

And that's the crucial point: In continuing to struggle, despite our failures, to live up to Jesus' great commandment of love we acknowledge the dignity inherent in our enemies, acknowledge that they are worthy of love, and acknowledge our own shortcoming. That's "imperfect" of course, but, I suspect, Thomas Aquinas would say it's a start!

Bible Study

"Feasting on the Word" Bible studies are once again being held in the Solid Rock social area on Monday evenings at 7:15



p.m. I am thankful for the persons who have gathered to study God's Word in preparation for the coming Sunday sermon.

The restrictions at Heritage Pointe have not been lifted yet, but you are missed and held in prayer. Please note that no leader has been designated for each week. Come pre-

pared to participate. We are following Pastor Paul's guidance in the reading of *Get Their Name* by Farr, Anderson, and Kotan. Below are listed the scriptures for your study.

- February 1: Acts 8:26-40, "Faith Sharing with the Unconnected"
- February 8: Luke 19:1-9, "Beginning Outside Conversations"
- February 15: John 2:1-11, "Creating Opportunities for New Relationships"
- February 22: Acts 2:42-47, "Building Authentic Relationships"

May the presence of the Christ be revealed to each one of you as we move from the season of Epiphany to the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday, February 17).

Joe Haney, Coordinator

Society of St. Andrew

The ministry of the Society of St. Andrew has been supported by members of Solid Rock. In Indiana in 2020 they:

- Distributed 1,197,090 million pounds of food
- Provided 12,591,270 million servings of fresh, nutritious food
- Received 1,930 hours of volunteer engagement
- Provided food to 242 hunger relief agencies at no cost



The Society of St. Andrew was founded by three United Methodist pastors and their families in Virginia in 1978. Beginning in 1992, the society expanded into other states. It is America's oldest and largest gleaning organization. You may learn more at endhunger.org.

A Christ-centered life does not mean a life in which one sings hymns, reads Scripture and edifies his neighbors by hanging texts on the walls. One does not become a Christian by doing a good deed a day, nor by go-getting for religion, nor by engaging in economic and political reform movements, even though these things are done from the noblest of human motives. A Christian is one who, believing that Christ is the Son of God, has that Christ-life in his soul.

—Fulton Sheen

Phone ministry

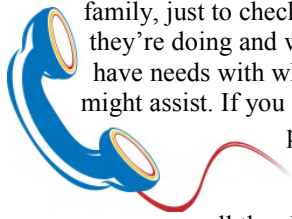
Thank you to those who have volunteered for this ministry! We need just a few more to get it off the ground.

We are looking for persons willing to make phone calls to members of our church family, just to check in and see how they're doing and whether they have needs with which the church might assist. If you are willing to

participate, or have questions about it, please call the church office at 375-3873. After we have compiled a list of participants, you will receive a list of individuals and families to contact.

Christ distributes courage through community; he dissipates doubts through fellowship. He never deposits all knowledge in one person but distributes pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to many. When you interlock your understanding with mine, and we share our discoveries, when we mix, mingle, confess and pray, Christ speaks.

—Max Lucado, *Fearless*



Thank you, Father, that the longest night ends in dawn and a new day. Thank you that your mercies are new every morning. Clear from my mind now all black thoughts of the night and give me confidence in your loving care as I face today. Give me your strength in my tiredness and the sure hope that your love will guard and keep me. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



—The Doubleday Prayer Collection

2021
FEBRUARY

