

Guiding To and Growing Through the Christian Life

Pastor, Rev. Sungmu Lee PhD

Parsonage Phone: (860) 507-6081

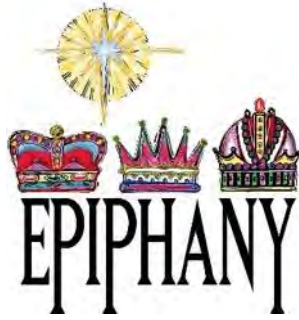
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Welcome to 2024! As we begin a new year, we are celebrating the Epiphany of the Lord on January 6th. The word *epiphany* comes from the Greek and means *manifestation* or *appearance*. God's glory appeared to the world, and now God is manifested to humankind in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ. Whenever we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, we encounter the wise men from the East and their gifts for the baby Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Based on the example of their gifts we give each other gifts at Christmas.

I would like to share a story about gifts. Before Europeans landed in this country, Native Americans had a tradition. They circulated the sacred peace pipe among the local tribes. It would stay in a certain cabin for a while, but sooner or later it should be given away again. When Europeans came, they were invited to share the sacred pipe, as was the custom. A leader of the European settlers immediately took the sacred pipe and put it on the shelf in his cabin. There it stayed and stayed and stayed.

After a long time, the Native Americans came to visit. It was obvious that they expected something. Finally, a translator explained that the settler should offer them a smoke and give them the pipe. The European settler was upset, saying, "They gave me the pipe. Now, do they want me to give it back to them?" Both the Native Americans and the European settlers did not understand each other. Clearly the Native Americans did not understand private property, and the term *Indian-giver* was coined.



We have inherited the European understanding of gifts. We keep gifts that we receive. However, I would say that God is more like the Native Americans in the story. God could be called an Indian-giver, in that he wanted gifts to circulate, to keep on giving. God wants us also to be Indian-givers. God has given us a lot of spiritual and material gifts, and God wants us to share them with our neighbors.

Looking back upon my ministry at our church during the past 18 months, I strongly feel it is God's gifts that you and I have done ministry harmoniously, respecting each other and supporting each other. Now, God wants us to circulate the gifts to our neighbors by serving and inviting them to our church.

Let us remind ourselves that like God, we are Indian-givers who circulate gifts. The Christian Church is not the place to save money, but the community to share the money for God's mission. Let us remember how much God has blessed us and how much Jesus Christ has sacrificed himself for us.

We have received a lot of gifts from God. Now, God wants us to circulate them to our neighbors. We may keep the gifts that we had received this Christmas, but we should share the gifts of God with our neighbors. Remember that like our God we are Indian-givers.

Happy New Year and Happy Epiphany!

Sungmu Lee

Church Office: (860) 673-2111
 Office Fax: (860) 673-5777
 Church Email: avonmumc@gmail.com
 Website: avonunitedmethodist.com

Church Office Hours: Tue, Wed, Fri 11 am - 4 pm
 Sexton Hours; Mon-Sat 6-8 am Mon-Thu 1-2 pm
 (estimate) on call as needed via cell (860) 960-3360

Sunday Worship Schedule:

8:30am Worship Service with Communion
 9:30am Sunday School for all ages
 10:30am Family Worship Service

On line worship:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/avon.mumc/>
 Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/user/AvonMUMC>

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JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

“Happy Birthday!” to the following people who are celebrating birthdays this month.



- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----|-----------------|
| 2 | Martin Kibbe | 17 | Mary Tew |
| 5 | Peter Tremback | 22 | Deb Slevinsky |
| 7 | Kevin Oommen | 26 | Kristen Baker |
| 9 | Justin Hunter | 29 | Amanda Holtzman |
| 11 | Colin Holtzman | 29 | Brett Holtzman |
| 14 | Dave Chase | 30 | Jean Pickens |
| 14 | Jennifer Lamoureux | | |

If you would like your special day(s) added, please notify the church office at;
avonmumc@gmail.com.

**REMEMBERING
 THOSE WHO HAVE
 TROUBLE
 GETTING OUT**



A card would be so appreciated.

Judy C.
 The Residence at
 Brookside
 117 Simsbury Rd.
 Avon, CT 06001

Katie M.
 11 Briarwood Road
 Farmington, CT 06032



FROM PASTORAL CARE:

KEEP US INFORMED FOR PASTORAL CARE



FIRST FRIDAY POT LUCK LUNCH

Friday, January 5
12 noon

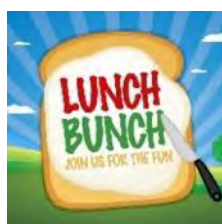
Ring in the new year by joining us at our monthly Pot Luck Lunch. Always great fellowship and conversation!! Bring your favorite main dish, side dish, salad, snack or dessert to share if you can – but it's not required!! Hope to see you there!!!

Just a reminder that if you should hear of someone from the congregation who is ill or has another need for pastoral care, please **notify the church office** who will share the info with the **Pastor and Pastoral Care Committee**.

Too often we all think someone else has passed on this information especially to the Pastor and that is not always the case. Better to get several messages than none.

Thanks for your help in keeping us all informed and able to keep all in prayer.

THURSDAY LUNCH BUNCH



Lunch Bunch is a casual get together of MUMCers every Thursday at noon (except week of First Friday Potluck Lunch). We meet in Fellowship Hall and bring our own lunches, sometimes share some cookies. It has become such an enjoyable custom.

We share stories, memories and even discuss current affairs a bit. Always lively conversation and fellowship. Won't you join us? Just pack up your own lunch, and grab a lawn chair (limited bench space available.) **There's always room for more!!! Just give us a try!!!!**

CHRISTMAS GOODIE BAGS FOR SPECIAL PEOPLE



As has been our tradition, we from Pastoral Care Committee gathered together and prepared goodie bags to be delivered to our special people for Christmas. Muffins, cuties, candy, tea bags,

We then enjoyed a meal together of lasagna, rolls, salads and desserts!!! Hope all had a Merry Christmas!!!





FELLOWSHIP HOUR

Linda Kime

Fellowship Hour is back in full swing down in Fellowship Hall after Sunday worship.

Responsibility for hosting Fellowship Hour rotates among the many committees of MUMC. Keeping it very light and simple this year. We appreciate the committee members giving us this service.

January Fellowship Hour Host is...

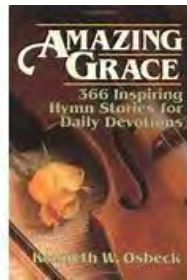
MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE

Responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the Memorial Garden, recording of those remembered in the garden, purchase and installation of memorial plaques. Memorial Garden Committee is under the jurisdiction of and overseen by the Board of Trustees.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions

Chris Calandriello



Women's Bible study resumes **Saturday, January 6 at 10 am** in the Parlor. Our study is based on the devotional book, **Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions** continues. There are scripture references which correspond to the words that we study and discuss what they mean in our lives. We sing these hymns, but no experience is necessary in reading the Bible or music! We pray as the Holy Spirit leads us and enjoy time together in fellowship. Please join us!!



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

VISION, PURPOSE

Allen Nixon

Everyone grieves differently and in their own way, and your grief will vary from day to day. There is no simple answer or definitive process for your grief, but know that you are not alone. This is the fundamental benefit of MUMC's Bereavement Support Group, knowing you are not alone and to remember Christ is always with you, and His grace supports us.

This Support Group provides a safe place to share each other's experiences, concerns and emotions that may be causing pain. Talking with the group about one's experiences with grief and listening to what others have experienced affords a great benefit to understand and process our personal grief.

Your time with the Bereavement Support Group is a time specifically set aside for you to process your grief, away from distractions and the day-to-day frustrations and interruptions we all experience. Here you may cry, remain silent, and express your emotions without fear of judgment, as the members of this group understand what you are going through.

The Bereavement Support Group meets the **third Wednesday of every month, except July and August, from 10 am to 11:30 am**. The meeting is held in the parlor and also on Zoom; the Zoom meeting ID and password will be sent to Group members several days prior to the meeting.



TRUSTEES REPORT

John Fillian, President

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who make a church tick.

It was a pleasure to work with the trustees. A big, Thank You goes to Hale & Linda, Marsha, Dave, Mark, Bruce, & Eugene. Thank you for your leadership, Pastor Lee.

Thank you to Bill who continues to go above and beyond his duties. His care for our church and his desire to constantly improve is appreciated.

And of course the many volunteers that are sitting on boards and doing what needs to be done to make this wonderful place function. It's a pleasure to be a part of this community.

Thank You All

CHURCHERY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The 4 year old class of Churchery School presented their annual Christmas concert on Monday, December 11 in our sanctuary. Parents, grandparents and many others enjoyed the singing and special bell ringing followed by reception of social time in Fellowship Hall



FINANCE COMMITTEE

Greg Slone

Adjusting for carryover from last year, the current general fund balance as of the end of November was a year to date deficit of roughly \$8,000 before the payment of apportionments.

Due to the year to date church deficit position, the church council voted on whether to utilize the reserve fund to pay the apportionments due in 2023. The reserve fund is normally used to cover emergency expenditures (such as emergency repairs to church items such as roof, elevator, boiler, etc.). The reserve fund balance as of end of November was at roughly \$104,000.

The apportionments due by MUMC in 2023 are just over \$42,000. The church council voted by majority vote to draw down the reserve fund to roughly \$62,000 to pay the apportionments due in 2023. The New York Annual Conference has informed MUMC that the apportionments due in 2024 will increase by 12% to roughly \$47,000, compared to a current national overall annual inflation rate of about 3%. Allow our church to remain in prayer concerning further potential draw downs to our church reserve ("rainy day") fund in 2024.



STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Matt Ross

SPRC conveyed a generous Christmas bonus to the five staff of the Church on behalf of the congregation. The bonus was accompanied by a hearty thank you to those individuals.



MEAL FOR WINSTED

Laura Gorden

The 2024 Schedule for Winsted meals is:

February 3

April 6

June 1

August 1

October 5

December 7

Always looking for people to help me with this mission project. Would love to have the youth help me some time.

BIBLICAL HAPPY NEW YEAR WISHES

(Readers' Digest)

1. May God bless you with a safe, healthy and joyous new year.

2. Let the Lord guide you to great things in 2024.

3. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

4. Your path for 2024 is blessed by God. May He help light the way to prosperity and peace.

5. God's grace will continue to be with you in the new year.

6. With a new year approaching, remember Jeremiah 29:11: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

7. God bless you and your loved ones as you head into 2024.

8. Proverbs 23:18 says, *"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."* Have a blessed and bountiful 2024!

9. Glory be to God and your loved ones in the new year and beyond.

10. Proverbs 16:9 tells us that *"in his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."* May God's path bring you happiness in the new year.

11. Praying that you have a cheerful New Year's.

12. Happy New Year! May God grant all your wishes in 2024.

13. I have faith that the new year will bring you everything you're hoping for. God bless!

14. May the Lord lift you up in the new year. Time to celebrate new beginnings!

15. God's grace is with you, and will continue to be with you in 2024. Happy New Year!

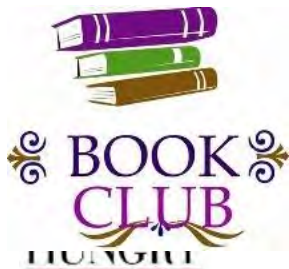
16. I can't wait to see all the hope and faith that follows you into 2024. Enjoy the new year.

17. Sending you and your loved ones a million prayers for a prosperous new year.

18. Happy New Year! Here's to God overseeing your path in 2024.

19. Sending you and your loved ones the biggest blessings on New Year's.

20. As Psalm 65:11 says, *"You crown the year with your goodness; your paths overflow with rich food."* Thank you for providing so much goodness in 2023. May your New Year's be memorable!

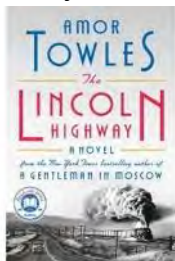


THE OTHER GOOD BOOK GROUP

Contact: Heather Kelsey,
hmkels@aol.com
(860) 670-1163

Hope you were able to get a head start on January's title, *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles. It is a historical fiction and literary fiction book that tells the story of four young men on a road trip from Nebraska to New York City over ten days.

Our discussion will be held **Sunday, January 21st at 7pm** in the Parlor.



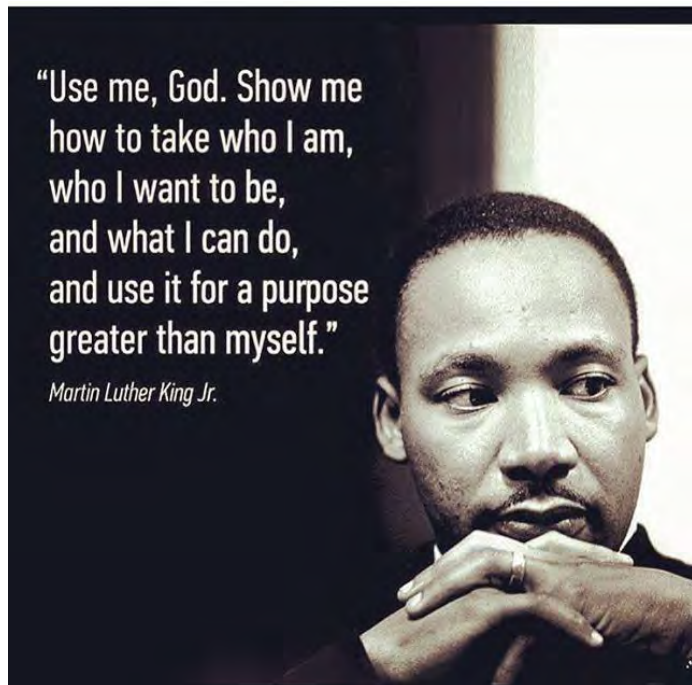
MEMORIAL'S FOOD PANTRY



Please help keep our food pantry stocked by bringing non-perishable food items to be dropped off in the blue bin located outside the kitchen. If you would prefer to make a monetary donation to the missions committee, notated for food pantry, I am willing to do the shopping.

Most useful food pantry donations for the winter season:

- Boxed milk or Powdered milk
- Cereal/Instant Oatmeal
- Pasta sauce and pasta
- Mac and cheese
- Soups/beef stew
- Canned fruits
- Tuna/salmon
- Canned meats/chicken, beef, spam
- Rice
- Beans/black, red, navy, baked
- Peanut butter/Jelly
- Coffee/Tea/Hot Chocolate
- Personal hygiene products



"Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself."

Martin Luther King Jr.



KEEPING MUMC "PEANUT FREE"

While we cannot guarantee MUMC will be totally peanut free, we would appreciate your help in making every effort to support a peanut free environment at Memorial -in the interest of safety and wellbeing of all and especially our little ones.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND OUT LATEST HAPPENINGS AND UP TO DATE INFORMATION!

avonunitedmethodist.com



**MEMORIAL UM CHURCH
867 WEST AVON ROAD_AVON, CT 06001**