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Welcome Rev. McAvoy!

The Reverend Effie E. McAvoy was ordained a Deacon in June of 1997 and an elder in full connection of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in June of 1999. After serving churches in North Carolina for 13 years, she moved to Oakland, Maine where she served Oakland-Sidney UMC for 7 years and was transferred in as an Elder in Full Connection to the New England Annual Conference. She earned her BA degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Women's Studies from Appalachian State University in 1994 and her MDiv from Boston University in 1997.

Currently Rev. McAvoy serves as the chair of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church (NEAC UMC) Commission on Religion and Race (CoRR). The role of CoRR in every level of the UMC is to educate the body on issues of race, racism, implicit bias, eurocentrism, and xenophobia. In its mission, CoRR is also called to speak truth to power and hold leaders to accountability in regards to issues of race, culture, and ethnicity.

In addition to her role as chair of NEAC CoRR, she also is a member of the Connectional Table of NEAC which oversees the work of program ministries within the New England Annual Conference.

Reverend McAvoy has received certificates from Duke Divinity Preaching Institute, Disciple Bible Study, and the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in police chaplaincy.

In 2017 she was reassigned to the UMC York Ogunquit where she serves as pastor and is the chaplain for the York police department.

Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church Vision Statement

We are Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church, a multi-generational Christ community seeking to sing God's spirit into the world by inviting all, serving all, loving all.

Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church
604 Seven Mile Road, Hope, RI 0283
Hope, RI 02831

Worship and Church School
Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9:00-12:00

Phone: 821-8217 • Fax: 826-7787 • E-mail: office@sovumc.org • Web site: sovumc.org

Rev. Katherine Mitchell

Open Spirit Task Force

The United Methodist Church has long had a somewhat ambiguous position regarding homosexuals. While the Book of Discipline (BOD) affirms that all people are of “sacred worth,” it also says that “homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Beginning in 1972, the BOD prohibits ordination of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals.” The BOD also prohibits UMC clergy from performing same-sex marriages.

While complaints and disciplinary actions have been taken against clergy who disregard these prohibitions, many have exercised their individual consciences and disregarded these restrictions in private and found ways to skirt these church laws, even openly defying them. Some conferences (regions), including New England, have allowed ordination of homosexual candidates and performance of same-sex weddings without consequence; in other regions, clergy accused of breaking these laws have been censured and brought to trial.

This issue came up at the 2016 General Conference. (General Conference is United Methodism’s highest legislative body, meeting every four years.) The bishops formed “A Commission on the Way Forward” that met for many months. Their recommendation, along with two others, was brought forward as legislation at a special session of the General Conference in 2019, held specifically to deal with the question of how to move forward during this time of deep division.

The plan, approved by a slim majority of delegates at the 2019 General Conference, calls for significantly harsher and more punitive responses to persons who violate the BOD’s rules regarding homosexuality. Among other provisions, it instituted mandatory penalties for pastors who perform same gender marriages and provided for the expulsion of bishops who do not aggressively enforce the BOD. This new plan was effective January 1, 2020, and has not only strengthened the church’s position on homosexuality, but has also

impacted how our denomination is perceived. Especially in the United States and parts of the world where homosexuality and same gender marriage is acceptable, the United Methodist church may be seen as less than welcoming to all, with potential consequences for membership, finances, etc.

In response to the actions of the 2019 General Conference, 2019 New England Annual Conference formed the Open Spirit Task Force to examine the future of United Methodism in New England for the 2020 session. The task force consists of about thirty-five clergy and laity from all over New England and is charged with determining, “whether and how United Methodists in New England might align with, create, or form a new church body in the Methodist tradition (independently or in collaboration with others).”

The task force has been working since last summer, examining theology, structure, finances, legalities, and communications through meetings, conference calls, and a two-day retreat in January. The goal of this work has been to determine what is essential to our identity as Methodists in New England and what the feasible options are for structuring ourselves depending on what General Conference decides.

The General Conference will be meeting in May, and addressing this issue again. A number of proposals have been made (including the denominational split widely reported in the news but by no means a sure thing), and no one knows what will happen. At this point, the goal of the task force is to provide you with information about our options, listen deeply and respectfully to each other, and hear what is important to you in our work. We have prepared a letter to be read to all congregations, developed a guide for local congregations who wish to discuss this in a structured way, plus other communication materials. There is also a series of district meetings at which members of the task force will share information and discuss proposed options.

At the 2020 New England Annual Conference, we may have unprecedented choices facing us. While

we don't know what will happen, we do know that change has come to our denomination, change lies ahead, and change brings opportunity. The work of this task force, including your thoughts and input, will be essential in leading us into a new day in the life of our church.

UMCOR Special Sunday: March 22

Life sometimes can be overwhelming! We read or watch on the news and see communities overwhelmed by natural disaster. We hear about humanitarian crises arising from civil unrest and war. We know that famine and drought are caused by climate change and see in our own community signs of food insecurity.

It can seem like too much. How could we possibly make a difference? How can our limited resources make a dent in the seemingly never-ending need of the world? We begin to shut out the reminders of suffering. But the reality is that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to respond with extravagant grace. Just as Jesus invited the disciples into the work saying, "We must do the works of him who sent me."

Through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), we can make a difference in the lives of communities and individuals whose lives

have been upended by storms, wars, climate change, and displacement. Through UMCOR, we see the impact of extravagant grace through the generosity of United Methodists. UMCOR lives out signs of Christ's extravagant grace in the world by prayerfully working with communities that are overwhelmed by natural or man-made disasters. UMCOR builds on the strengths of what is already available in a community and actively involves the people affected in recovery efforts. One of the wonderful aspects of The United Methodist Church is that we can do so much more together than we ever could do on our own – and through our connection UMCOR has been doing this for 80 years.

The special offering received on UMCOR Sunday helps support the small but impactful UMCOR staff who are specialists in disaster response and recovery. Funds also ensure adequate training for emergency response coordinators, construction volunteers, and case managers who assist victims of disasters, chain saw gangs and sheetrock installers.

Because we join our church's offerings with those of United Methodist congregations around the world, UMCOR remains strong in its day-to-day operations. If this mission speaks to you, please join us in contributing on March 22 either in the special envelope or through the Give+ phone app.

Lenten Prayer

Almighty and Everlasting God,
You have given the human race
Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of
humility.
He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man
And giving His life on the Cross.
Help us to bear witness to You
By following His example of suffering
And make us worthy to share in His
Resurrection.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus
Christ, Your Son.

April Circuit Rider
Information Due
March 14th



Upcoming Events

Soup and Soul

Soup and Soul will start on March 5th and continue through Lent. This year we will be watching and discussing the video series "The Chosen." The Chosen is a dramatization of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ based on the Gospel of Luke. The show will give us a chance to enter into the Jesus' journey in a beautiful way! The program will start right at 6:30 so even if you aren't eating soup please come then. (We also need people to bring soup, bread, and dessert. Sign up in Fellowship Hall.)

Women in Spiritual Harmony (WISH)

WISH will be continuing its Lenten study called "Give Up Something Bad for Lent " by James W Moore. The study will start February 26th and continuing through Lent. WISH meets Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 at the church. All women are welcome!

Wednesday Morning Study Group

This group will continue with its "Living the Questions" study. This series, featuring thirty acclaimed scholars, theologians, and other experts, is designed to create an environment where participants interact with each other in exploring Christianity. This group meets at 11:00 a.m. in the Hope Room. All are welcome to join at any time, regardless of your background or level of Biblical knowledge.

Wisdom Seekers Evening Study Group

This group will be on hiatus through Lent. See the April *Circuit Rider* for our next study.

RISEM Spring Lay Servant Academy

Spring program offerings include the Basic Lay Servant course (required before any Advanced course and needs your Pastor's approval) and the following advanced courses:

- Discover Your Spiritual Gift
- Leading Worship
- Leading Public Prayer
- Evangelism

These courses will be held on Saturday March 7th and 14 (attendance at both sessions is mandatory) from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Memorial UMC, 176 Somerset Avenue in Taunton, MA.

Registration starts at 9:30. Please bring a bagged lunch. Cost is \$30, which includes the book. Checks can be mailed to RISEM Lay Servant Ministries - Jen Jordan, 624 Pine St. Bridgewater, MA 02324, or contact Ruth Koha James - District Director at risem.layservantmin@gmail.com.

United Methodist Women (UMW)

The United Methodist Women will meet on Thursday, March 19th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Barbara Walz will present the program "We Rise: Meeting God's Call to Transform Communities". This is our annual Call to Prayer and Self Denial program to raise funds to change the lives of women, children and youth on the margins through our gifts. Please bring a lunch. Desert and beverage will be served.

Family Fun Night

Family Fun Night will be Friday March 20th starting at 6pm. Come to the Fellowship Hall for dinner and a fun Family Night In! Any interest in cooking or hosting for our families, please contact me at lhardgrove@yahoo.com. Hope to see you there!

Lisa Marciniak

Save the Date: Soup Luncheon!

On Monday, March 23rd, the United Methodist Women (UMW) will sponsor their annual Soup Luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. There will be a variety of soups served with bread, dessert, and beverages. Tickets are \$8.00 and can be purchased from a member of the UMW or by calling the church office at 821-8217. They will also be available in Fellowship Hall after worship closer to the event. If you need further information, please see Barbara Walz.

Regular Meetings and Events

Editor's Note: Our church has many meetings, classes, and fellowship opportunities that occur on a regular basis. Please check the list below for the schedules of programs or opportunities you might be interested in. If you have something you'd like

included in this section, please email me at belllomb@cox.net, call me at 944-9668, or leave a note in the Circuit Rider mailbox at church.

Hannah Bell-Lombardo

- **Monday Morning Prayer Group:** We gather for prayer in the Hope Room at 10:00 a.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.
- **United Methodist Women (UMW):** The UMW meets the third Thursday of each month at 11:00 a.m. Bring a bag lunch; beverages and dessert are provided. See the article in this section on this month's details.
- **Knitting Ministry:** The Knitting Ministry meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:00 in the library. Our projects include prayer shawls, baptismal shawls, premie and chemo hats, and sweaters for World Vision. Even if you can't attend the meetings, you can always knit at home. If you have questions, please call Sue Kizlinski at 401-527-8702.
- **Women in Spiritual Harmony (WISH):** WISH meets Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. See the article in this section for our current study.
- **Wednesday Morning Bible Study:** This group meets Wednesdays at 11:00 in the Hope Room. See the article in this section for the current study.
- **Wednesday Wisdom Seekers Evening Study Group:** This group will not meet during Lent but will resume after Easter.
- **Men's Fellowship Breakfasts:** This group meets at the Phenix Square Restaurant at 6:00 a.m. March's meetings will be on the 6th and 20th. All men are welcome.
- **Signing Choir:** The Signing Choir practices at 9:00 a.m. on Sundays and perform the Lord's Prayer each Sunday plus another performance each month. All are welcome!
- **Family Sunday:** The first Sunday of each month is Family Sunday where our children serve as ushers, greeters, Communion stewards, and liturgists. If you have children who are taking part in the worship, please arrive by 9:00 a.m. so we can run through the bulletin and review our "jobs" for the day.

Help Wanted

Part-time job opportunity

Valerie and Jay O'Connor are looking for an experience and dependable adult to work with our adult daughter who has special needs. This position is available immediately and is offered through the RI My Choice Program. It included assisting with/ teaching independent living skills and safety skills in the community. The hours of work are 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Very competitive pay. Please call (401) 301-9477 to speak with Valerie. Leave a voicemail if she is not available and your call will be returned. Thank you.

Food Pantry

Do you like to shop? Clip coupons? If so, have we got the job for you! The Shepherd's Pantry, our food ministry, needs someone to join our shopping team (or more than one "someones" are welcome!) Shopping can be done at your convenience. If you can help keep our food pantry stocked and ready for those who use this important ministry, please drop Pam or PK a note.

Fellowship Hour Sign-Up

Hosting Fellowship Hour is a great time to promote fellowship in the church. You don't have to provide anything elaborate—just some goodies and coffee (and help/instructions are available for the coffee-making). Simply sign up on the list in Fellowship Hall.

Ushers

Ushering is a great way to make our members and guests feel welcome. New signup sheets are available for your use—sign up for the Sundays you're available. No need for a weekly commitment.

Open Table of Christ

We have groups going to the Open Table of Christ on Wednesday and Thursday mornings to serve lunch to their food pantry recipients. If you can help (providing food, going to serve), please contact Barbara Bicknell.

Office Notes

EFT

If you would like to use electronic funds transfer, or have changed the amount you'd like withdrawn, you need to fill out a new form. They are available through the office.

Offering Envelopes

2020 offering envelopes are now available in the hallway. If you would like to receive a box, please sign up on the clipboard and the envelope fairy will magically bring you a set. Just a reminder, if you use EFT, you do not need a set of envelopes.

Upcoming Event?

If you have an upcoming event or are hosting coffee hour and need supplies, please check what we have in the kitchen and storage area. If something is missing, let Pam know if we need to order something at least two weeks ahead of time.

Sunday Bulletin Announcements

Just a reminder that your announcements for the Sunday bulletin must be submitted to the office not later than the Tuesday before you'd like them to appear. Call the church office (821-8217), leave a note in the church office mailbox, or email office@sovumc.org. Thank you!

Church Program Drop-offs

Are you dropping something off for Open Table, the food pantry, or another mission project or event? Please put a label on your items/boxes so we can ensure they end up in the proper place. If you put it in the clothing closet (next to the sanctuary), please leave Pam a note so she knows it's there.

New Email?

Be sure to let us know any changes in your email address so we can be sure any electronic communications reach you. Let the church office know of any email, phone, or address changes by email (office@sovumc.org) or leave a note on Pam's desk.



Music Notes

Lent and Easter are upon us. This is an important and exciting time for our music worship team. We have started rehearsal for our new anthems for Palm Sunday and Easter. We are hoping that more folks will join in with us for these special occasions (but also for our regular Sunday morning musical worship offerings. Remember that it is not necessary to be able to read music. Our choir specialized in learning our anthems by rote repetition. Also, our adult choir is very much a joyous group of friends that is always welcoming of all who come!!!! Do join us!



Steven Haunschild

Caring and Sharing

Socks, Mittens, Hats, and Gloves Needed

Theresa Squire will be collecting winter hats, mittens, socks, and gloves for Project Outreach, a ministry closely aligned with SOV. Look for the box in Fellowship Hall.

Shepherd's Pantry

Our food pantry continues needs all the basics, including boxes. We can use tuna, pasta, spaghetti sauce, cereal, fruit, soup, vegetables, and crackers. Since many of our clients have health issues, we can use healthier food options, including gluten-free and lower sodium/fat free items. Toilet paper is needed as well. And please save computer paper and similar sized boxes—they are perfect for our food pickups. Many thanks for your continued donations and cash gifts for the support to help our neighbors in need.

Shut-Ins

The Nurture-Outreach Ministry Team has a new shut-in list posted on the bulletin board next to the kitchen. Please think of these important members of our community and send them a card, or better yet, stop by for a visit. If there's anyone you know who needs a visit, let one of the team

members or the church office know and we'll add them to the list.

Fellowship Hour Thank You

There is not a lot to say about how important fellowship hour after church is until you look around and see everyone visiting and connecting during this time. A special thank you goes out to all our Sunday Fellowship Hour hosts and hostesses who provide the goodies and make this time possible. All should step up to the plate and take a turn. Feel free to have a friend or family member help you out—volunteers are needed and help showing how everything is done is available.

Facebook

PK invites you to “friend” her on Facebook.

Save Your Pop-Tabs!

We are continuing to collect your pop tabs—there's a box in the kitchen for them. These tabs go toward helping with food, supplies, and utilities for the Ronald McDonald House in Providence. The House provides a home-away-from-home for families of critically ill children. Without these donations, the House would not be able to provide for the families. Thank you for the tabs and if you have any questions about donations, please contact Sue Dyl.

Blood Pressure Measurement

We are able to check blood pressures in the office. Check with Pastor Katherine.

Church Council Minutes January 27, 2020

Church Council members present included Sandy Knapp, Tom Senerchia, Loxi Ellingwood, Lisa Marciniak, Meg Davis, Barbara Walz, Howard Gay, Jay O'Connor, Hannah Bell-Lombardo. Also present were Pastor Katherine Mitchell, and congregation members Rob and Marti Bower.

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. We shared our joys and concerns, and Katherine opened the meeting with a prayer.

In general church business

- Katherine noted that Tom has been appointed the district emergency management resource.
- The Nominations Report is complete enough to be published in the next *Circuit Rider*.
- Jay and Meg will determine how they will cover meetings so a lay leader is present as needed.

Katherine reviewed the transition process:

- 6/21 is her official last Sunday, though she is suggesting it be 6/14, the same Sunday as the children's end-of-Sunday-School-year celebration and church picnic.
- There will be a substitute pastor on 6/28. This could be lay speaker or someone else, and can be a time of reflection.
- Katherine will be compensated through 6/30; the new pastor's compensation will start on 7/1.
- Finance will have to put some money aside for the new pastor's moving expenses.
- The 7/5 service will be a celebration of appointment; there is a recommended liturgy. The new pastor may not wish to preach on that Sunday, but to observe and start to understand SOV's “culture.” He or she may wish to do a pastoral prayer and/or deliver the benediction.
- In terms of Katherine's replacement, Tom will receive a phone call to schedule a meeting between the new pastor, SPRC, the lay leaders, and the District Superintendent. This will be an open-ended discussion during which attendees can ask questions, express any concerns, etc. Katherine feels that we should hear something within the next week or two.

Our next meeting will be February 24th.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Bell-Lombardo

Shepherd of the Valley
United Methodist Church
604 Seven Mile Road
Hope, RI 02831

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TIME VALUE—DO NOT DELAY

MARCH, 2020 CIRCUIT RIDER



Soup's On!!

UMW's Soup Luncheon

Monday, March 23rd, 11:30 -1:30

\$8.00 for soup, bread, dessert, & beverage

Tickets available in Fellowship Hall