



Running Leash

During this morning's run I looked down at my dog, Koda, with a genuine gaze of appreciation. "Good boy," I spoke warmly and encouragingly. The outing felt like such a mutual benefit, blessing really, as we rounded the last mile. And unwittingly, the simple tether between us- the running lease- made it so.

My Australian shepherd dog can run for hours, especially when deer inspire him. While my endurance is not quite that strong, I enjoy being out, working up a sweat, and loosening the thoughts, worries, stresses and nerves that jumble up during the day. As such, both Koda and I would be fine alone, doing our thing. Since adopting him, I fully embraced the responsibility to give him work and play as he needs since we don't have sheep to herd. And the Christmas gift of a new leash from my brother who also runs with his dog seemed like an obvious piece of equipment along with chew toys and balls. The running leash is a practical option for two beings who need and thrive with their movement.



But today, I fully appreciated that such a tether was a lifeline. Logistically, Koda helps me run faster, especially as we get going-his energy a little bit higher than mine in the early morning. The pulling is just the right amount of push/inspiration without being harmful or annoying. Likewise, I keep him safe, out of harms way of traffic or temptations to chase. And today, the lifeline quality kept me going physically, but especially mentally and emotionally. Here was a companion, another friendly creature, making his way in the world, doing the best he could. The leash slacked to the point of side-by-side movement when I realized we needed each other to keep going on a cold day after several miles. We counted on each other to be our more full selves, not selfishly or obliviously running off without note or care of the other. We had to pay attention in such a way to "be in step" and respect the way of the day.



The season of Lent invites us to move, engage this way as well: paying attention, intentional about nourishing our souls, and doing so not just individually but alongside others and especially tethered to God. Throughout Jesus' story, he modeled and spoke about such a tether with God, such a connection that nourished, motivated, and strengthened him. And not being self-focused, Jesus told his disciples they could have a relationship like that.

"I am the vine and you are the branches. Remain in me...As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." ~ John 15

This link for all of us is not just about utility, just as I don't use a running leash to train my dog to pull me and increase my pacing. The link sustains. And even in those moments when such a tether is or seems broken, we can trust that our commitment to stay connected is enough. Jesus, hanging on the cross, asked God why he had been forsaken, and in the next breath, entrusted his very spirit into God's hands.

Running, tethered

with you in Christ, *Pastor Sarah Merchant*





THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022

Holy Week 2022

Maundy Thursday, April 14, 6-7pm: Shared Meal & Hand Washing ~ Together in community, like the disciples and Jesus at the Last Supper, we will make bread, break bread, serve each other in hand washing, and remember the story of when Jesus experienced both great trust and betrayal. This simple meal and devotion will be in the Fellowship Hall. If possible, let us know you will be attending this service. However, there will be plenty for all who come.

Good Friday, April 15, 6-7pm: Worship of Lament ~ With candles and readings, we will retell the story of Jesus' last hours on earth, in all his suffering, doubt, grief, and compassion.

Easter Sunday, April 17, 10:30am: Resurrection Celebration ~ Let flowers, songs, light, and awe gather us on this Easter morning for worship as we celebrate that Jesus Christ is alive ALWAYS, restoring beauty and love that invites us still to be amazed.

Join us for an Easter Breakfast for all at 8:30am and an Easter Egg Hunt on the front lawn at 9:30am before service.

Other Ways to Engage:

- ♦ Participate in weekly worship in person and online
- ♦ Join the Wednesday Morning Bible Study
- ♦ Follow SteviUMC on Facebook for daily Lenten devotions
- ♦ Read *Good Enough: 40ish Devotions for a Life of Imperfections* by Kate Bowler and follow the individual reading plan at steviumc.org
- ♦ Share a story about how you have met God through this community of faith

SUMC Spring Clean-up

Get your rakes, spades and knee pads ready....the return of the annual spring church grounds spruce up is coming. Weather cooperating, on April 2nd we will get the church and grounds ready to celebrate Easter. Along with the usual clean up this year, we will be doing some furniture rearranging.

- ♦ The pews need to be reinstalled in the sanctuary for Palm Sunday. We will need a crew of 3-4. Shape up the SELC playground in for the kids to get outside and enjoy the spring weather.
- ♦ Declutter the School-aged class room in preparation for the summer program.

Lots to do this year, so please put this on you calendar.

Dean Diers has volunteered to serve breakfast starting at 8:30 to give you an energy boost to start the day.

We'll get started on the work about 9:00 and should be done mid-afternoon or before, depending on how many souls show up to help. Look for a sign up sheet in the entry as you come into the sanctuary. Come for all or part. It really is a great day of fellowship and a celebration of spring.





April 2022 Worship

Good Enough: Embracing the Imperfections of Life and Faith

A Worship Design Studio Lent Series based on the work of Kate Bowler.

We continue our worship series nurturing the daily practices, goodness and growing seeds just before us each day. Sunday worship is a place to practice a robust grace and openness to what is- that which is broken, not shiny or even lost. As we live into this way as Jesus shows us with humility, we become more like and one with Christ.



April 3: We are fragile.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume... Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." - John 12: 1-8

Jesus speaks the words no one wanted to admit: he was not always going to be around. "Oh, don't say that," so many of us have said to a loved one who speaks the truth about the fragility of life. Perhaps we get uncomfortable because it reveals the precious nature of the present moment, laying bare the beauty and horror of it all. The indescribable pain we know we will one day face invades our senses like a pervasive perfume, inescapable. What if we stopped denying the limited nature of our lives and breathed in deeply the fragrance of vulnerability?

Palm Sunday, April 10: You Are a Group Project.

As he rode along... the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." - Luke 19: 28-40

Jesus orchestrated a low-budget parade into a city where he knew his days were numbered. "Get me a colt," he said. Not a steed. Not a float. A young, green donkey (not the color, that's horse-speak for not-ridden-alot-yet). And folks gathered and his friends started some liturgical shouting that ticked off the local priests. Life is hard and we all need friends and sometimes big, loud, praying that will not be messed with. We are created for interdependence. So all our hiding and pretending that we are "perfectly fine" all on our own just won't work. Get on the donkey when you need to and let people lay down their cloaks for you and make some noise for you. 'Cause you know you'll do it for them too when the chips are down.





THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022

Maundy Thursday, April 14: We are blessed, regardless.

"Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." - John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

The mid-20th century brought a particular shift as televangelists began to speak of blessing as a "pact" with God in which our good works (mostly our good wallets) would multiply the prosperity in our lives. But for Jesus, this moment in the Upper Room was full of trouble, danger, deception, and uncertainty. Surely Jesus, Son of God, had enough blessing capital to out-manuever this set of circumstances! In the midst of the pain of his moment, Jesus defines the real blessing pact—washing feet, breaking the bread, lifting the cup, sharing even with those who are about to betray him. Love that cannot be quantified reminds us that each and every person is blessed, always, regardless of who we are, how we've failed, or what we've accomplished.



A Good Friday, April 15: Even Today, God is Here and Somehow, That is Good Enough.

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. - John 18: 1-19;42

Some days are just lousy and that doesn't even begin to cover it. The first recorded use of "guode friday" was in the South English Legendary, a text from 1290. Calling a day "good" was a way to denote a time of holy observance, not judge it as a pretty solid "8" on the scale of fabulousness. What if even our lousiest days could be experienced as a holy observance of the reality that this is life? Perhaps the "good news" in the midst of the devastation is that God is buried with us in our deepest pain, wrapping us, holding us until we can move through that birth canal once again into renewed life.

Easter Sunday, April 17: A Good Enough Faith

They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). - John 20: 1-18

Easter is tricky when it comes to faith. We come for the happy ending—the "and then they lived happily ever after." The resurrection story proclaims hope over despair and life over death, yet we know that life continued, and continues for us, as a story of spiking heartbreak moments that are not forever fixed. The nature of being created for love is that we will always hunger for more, that there is never enough life and love to satisfy. And endings are often too soon. But perhaps a good enough faith is one that moves through the chronic nature of being incurably human with an eye for resurrection moments that assure us that this good enough life is worthy of our amazement.

April 24: "Be the Light"

How do we balance the admonition to be light to the world with the admonition to be humble? Scriptures Matthew 5: 13-16 and Luke 17: 11-19.



THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022

March Trustee News

The Cedur shingles have been ordered to replace the roof. The contractor was told that there is a 4-5 month waiting period for the shingles, so it looks like it will be this fall before the project is completed., but anything is possible.

The window coverings have been installed in the Fellowship Hall and SELC classrooms and look very nice. We are still working with Garden City Heating and Plumbing to get the temperature controlled in the Fellowship Hall.

Spring Cleanup To-do list: General yard clean-up ie: raking the lawn and cleaning the flower/shrub beds, dismantle and remove swing set, clean the dirt/debris along the boulevard on College St., edge the grass along the sidewalks, reinstall the pews in the sanctuary, declutter the school aged classroom, rake/clean up the SELC play area, move/level the pea gravel around the fire exit, remove the exit/enter signs from 4x4 posts so they can be repurposed in the play area, move stones from the shed to the pea gravel.

Dean Diers will have breakfast ready at 8:30 and we'll get started right after breakfast.. Please bring shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows or other favorite lawn working implements. It is quite a list this year. Come for all or part. It's a great way to celebrate spring, the coming of Easter and fellowship. Submitted by John Fisher



Recycling Program

- Good News! Our church recycle program is expanding beyond plastics to also include aluminum cans.
- These will be collected by me, Lisa Nicholls, on the 4th Sunday of each month. Please drop them directly into the back of my black Ford Escape which will be located in the church parking lot, before and after service, tailgate open. (This plan seems a lot easier than dumping them in the Pastor's garage!) Please make sure they're empty and rinsed if they contained beer.
- The cans will be donated to AniMeals, a Missoula nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing, feeding and healing cats. AniMeals is a No Kill adoption Center. **Check out their website: [www. AniMeals.com](http://www.AniMeals.com)**



One Spring Ago





THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022

2022 United Methodist Summer Camps in Montana

Luccock Park Camp is searching for employees for the summer 2022 season
Contact Steve Tongue, luccockmanager@gmail.com for any questions about the position or the application.

Flathead Lake United Methodist Camp ~ Open year round
Physical: 21339 Methodist Camp Road, Rollins, MT 59931
Camp Phone/Reservations: 406-844-3483



Vacation Bible School: A Wilderness Escape!

Open for students ages 5-12, free of charge.

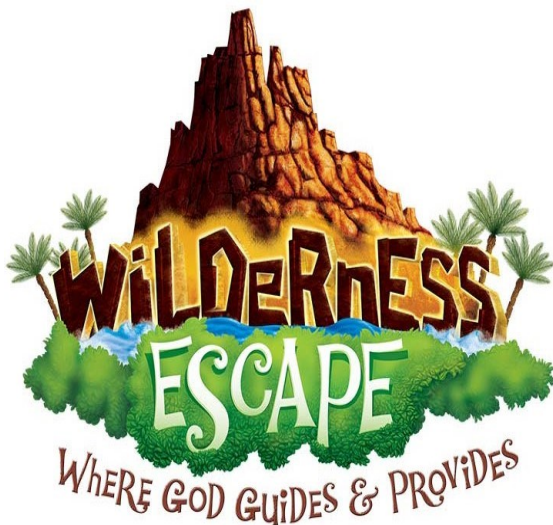
June 20-23, 9-11:30am. Special BBQ on Thursday at 11:30.

Join Moses and friends through the desert to discover God's AMAZING LOVE that never stops.

It even springs out of rocks!

Registration open now. Contact steviumc@gmail.com

Volunteers needed to host, provide snacks, and lead crafts & games. Contact Gina Farnham at 406-777-_____



SELC Volunteers

Chefs abound in the volunteers of SUMC. Since Tori, the former cook moved into be a teacher, SELC is looking for a new cook. In the meantime, helping hands have made lunches that any kiddo could love- Sloppy Joes, Pigs in a Blanket, and Spaghetti. Thank you to Clyde, John, Lisa, joey, and Pat for stepping up to the oven with generous hearts.



A world of children is a world of delight! Sapphire Early Learning Center is hiring teachers, Part-time and full-time positions are available. We train you and offer continued support for you. We are looking for committed people ages 19 through 99 who are able to manage small classrooms of children with another team member. Call Sapphire Early Learning Center at 406-625-2660 to learn more.



Kid's Summer Camp at Sapphire Early Learning Center

Begins June 13, Monday-Friday from 8am to 4pm

For students age 5-12

Activities include Storytelling, painting, Arts & Crafts & Local Adventures

For mor info & registration visit sapphireearlylearningcenter.com

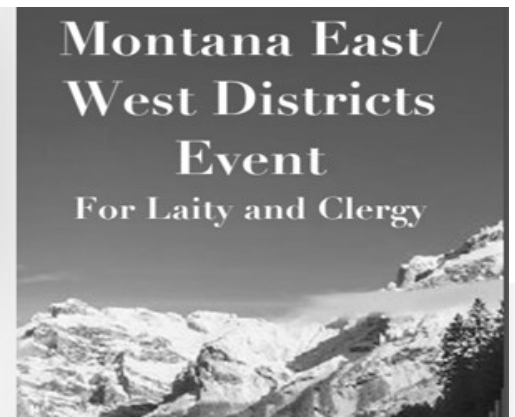




THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022



RSVP DETAILS

Cost for the event is \$30/person and \$10/church for online livestream trainings.

RSVP for the Gathering Event at

<https://mtnsky-reg.brapp.com/2022MSCDistrictGatheringMT>

April 6th

8:00-9:30am Ecumenical Clergy Breakfast at Rocky Mountain College.

Lunch on your own. Prescott Hall at Rocky Mountain College.

1:00-5:00 pm Livestream Workshops at Hope UMC.

These workshops will last 45 minutes, followed by a break.

Security and Safety training with retired law enforcement officer Rick Hunt.

Laity worship training with Patti Agnew. Rev. Patti is the CRM for Montana East.

Cultural Competency introduction with MSC staff member Rev. Betty Nguyen.

Technology needs in post covid age with Russ Dornish.

Supper on your own.

7pm Wheatley Lecture with Nadia Bolz-Weber at MSU-Billings.

Petro Hall MSUB Student Union Building.

This lecture will include a question & answer period with Bishop Karen.

April 7th

9-11 am Worship and District Event at Shiloh UMC.

11-12 UMCOR Kits. View the district newsletter for needed supplies.

11-12 District Roundtable

12 Bag lunch to go.

The United Methodist Men spend time assembling UMCOR Ash Sifter Kits

After a fire, there is a lot of cleanup to do. However, when a home is consumed by fire, we may only be able to sift ashes to potentially locate personal belongings for the homeowners.

UMCOR Cleaning bucket - <https://umcmission.org/umcor-cleaning-kit/>

The link above is just examples of an item that meets our specifications. Shopping locally is encouraged.

Thanks to Kathy and Dana Bryson, Disaster Coordinators for Pacific NW area for sharing the kit directions. For questions or discussion, contact: Mike Moore, Disaster Response Coordinator for the Mountain Sky Conference disasterresponse@mtnskyumc.org





News in the United Methodist Church: Who Are We Going to Be?

In March 2022, the Commission on General Conference (GC) postponed the 2020 General Conference to 2024. This conference, typically held every four years, is the time when representatives of the world-wide United Methodist body gather to vote on legislation that affects the entire denomination. The delayed GC has brought forth some changes outside this legislative process that requires local churches, clergy, and annual conference to make important decisions for their future.

The last time GC met in 2019 at a special-called session, the main topic of human sexuality brought legislation and decisions into the UMC that further upheld the language excluding “self-avowed homo sexuals” from ordination and barring UMC clergy from performing same-sex marriages, increasing the punishment for deviations to this policy. As the pandemic took hold and these realities came into effect, clergy, churches and annual conferences have acted differently in moving forward. In 2020, a group of leaders, comprising various constituencies of the Church, wrote legislation called “The Protocol,” which is a proposal to restructure the United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences. This agreement will allow each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person.

Since this legislation cannot be adopted until a UMC General Conference (a gathering that is required to be done in person), some groups have decided to act now.

Beginning May 1, 2022, The Global Methodist Church (globalmethodist.org) will become a legal denomination. It represents a more traditional perspective of theology following the Wesleyan roots. Current UMC churches and pastors have begun disaffiliating and will continue to do so throughout the world. The Council of Bishops asked the UMC’s Judicial Council in March 2022 to make a decision about whether entire annual conferences could disaffiliate.

In the midst of all these shifts, local churches and clergy are encouraged to have the conversation about what this split will mean. The United Methodist Church will remain a denomination and may make some significant legislative decisions at GC 2024, perhaps even eliminating exclusive language in the *Book of Discipline*.

How does this effect Stevensville UMC? As a member of this connectional body of United Methodist churches, we are impacted both relationally and logistically. Engaging in open dialogue about the future of SUMC is important for the transparency of all involved and the ability to live out our mission *to be disciples of Christ that offer hope, Inclusion and purpose for a community in need of healing care, community engagement, faith formation and compassionate love.*

Ways to be in dialogue and informed:

- ♦ Attend the Zoom Webinar, April 5 at 6pm “To Stay or Not to Stay, That is the Question for United Methodists.” Visit <https://www.umarc.org/> to register.
- ♦ Attend “Fearless Conversations,” a dialogue with Pastor Sarah about the future of UMC & SUMC on April 10 at 11:45. (Future conversations may be offered, too.)
- ♦ Contact Pastor Sarah with questions and concerns and/or for individual conversations.

This is an evolving reality with many questions yet to be answered, but let us be intentional about bringing our prayers and curiosity to the table where God meets us with grace.

"TO STAY OR NOT TO STAY, THAT IS THE QUESTION" FACING UNITED METHODISTS

ZOOM WEBINAR
TUESDAY APRIL 5, 2022
8 PM EASTERN, 7 PM CENTRAL, 6 PM MOUNTAIN,
AND 5 PM PACIFIC

Hosted by: United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy & Friends (UMARC)

As United Methodism divides, congregations & members have choices "to stay or not to stay" within the denomination. This webinar explores options and differences between organizational models, power of bishops, appointment or non-appointment of pastors, property questions, teaching on human sexuality, chargeable offenses, etc.

Hosting the discussion will be Rev. Dr. Rebekah Miles, Susanna Wesley Professor of Practical Theology & Ethics, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Co-host will be Rev. Dr. Israel I. Alvaran of Reconciling Ministries Network. Other participants include Pennsylvania authors of a recent analysis contrasting perspectives & policies: Tracy Merrick, Rev. B.T. Gilligan, and Rev. Dr. David L. Morse.



(IMAGES APPEAR AS LISTED, L TO R)

Free Registration: www.umarc.org



THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

April 2022

Welcome the Stranger: A Study of Compassion in Difference

From the heart of the scriptures is a welcome to all, especially strangers from foreign lands, different backgrounds and unique experiences especially determined by race and ethnicity. As diverse humans, this can describe each of us and our ancestors in some way. How might hearts and relationships be transformed with new or refined desire and tools to *welcome the stranger*?

Join the 4 week conversation and study with Pastor Sarah this May & June. Times TBD by the group.

The curriculum comes to us from Pastor AJ Bush as part of her doctoral program.

Please email revsarahmerchant@gmail.com to RSVP for the class.

We need 8 people to hold the class.



Wednesday Morning Bible Study ~ 10am in the After School Room

A gathering of people grounding their life in faith, fellowship, reflection and study meets each week at 10am on Wednesdays. Come at any time even if you don't have the materials because the conversation and prayer is rich.

United Methodist Men

2nd Saturday of each month Come for breakfast!

MAY United Methodist Women

May 21st at 10am

Program to be announced. Please plan to attend. God Bless, Bev Schneider

The Stevi UMC Book Club will meet April 10th at 3 PM in the Fellowship Hall

Our reading choice this month is "Tisha" by Robert Spect. Tisha is a story about a young school teacher who moves to the Alaskan wilderness.

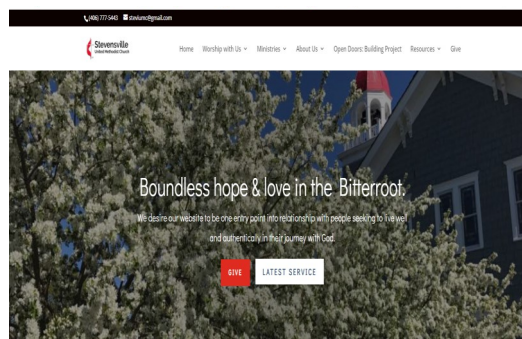
You are all invited to join us for a discussion about this book!!

Check the Stevensville United
Methodist Calendar online

Go to the Website:

www.steviumc.org

Click on Calendar



April Liturgists

4/3 Bill Gragg

4/10 Nilda Bishop

4/17 Ed Sperry

4/24. Bev Schneider

Ways to Contact Us

Office phone: 406-777-5443
Office email: steviumc@gmail.com
Pastor Sarah's email: revsarahmerchant@gmail.com
Church website: steviumc.org
Office hours: Tuesday through Friday 9am to 12pm
Sapphire Early Learning Center 406-625-2660
Sapphireearlylearningcenter.com
director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com

Nursery & Sunday School
For kids during worship service,
10:30-11:30am

Worship Opportunities

In Person Worship: 10:30 AM

Live Streaming Worship at 10:30 on YouTube Channel & Facebook, YouTube

April Events

4/2: Breakfast for Crew 8:30am

4/2: Spring Cleanup 9am-2pm

4/9: UMM Breakfast

4/10: Fearless Conversation: Future of UMC
11:45am-12:30pm

4/10: Book Club 3pm-4pm

4/14: Maundy Thursday meal and service
6pm to 7pm

4/14: Good Friday service 6pm-7pm

4/17: EASTER!

Breakfast, 8:30am

Easter Egg Hunt, 9:30am

Worship, 10:30am

4/24: Recycling, bring cans to church



~ CHANGES OF ADDRESS ~
Bulk-rate mail is not forwarded.
If your address changes, if we have it wrong,
or if you no longer want to receive this newsletter,
please let us know.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Stevensville United Methodist Church
216 College
Stevensville MT 59870

The Glad Tider

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