A story of three parades.

Methodist Pastors in Iowa typically move the last week in June or the first week in July. This was the case in 1995 when we arrived in Webster City, making our first Sunday July 2. After worship, a young couple with small children comparable in age to ours invited us to the July 4th parade in the bustling town of Williams.

What a parade it was. All the fair queen candidates, every state, county and local politician had a float, a myriad of antique tractors rolled by and to my astonishment semi-trucks one after another idled down the four block “Main Street” all before everything (I mean everything) that John Deere, New Holland and Kinze was trying to sell that year was presented. Our new friends loved it, it was the center of that little town’s annual celebration and they were all so proud. As the 2-hour cavalcade (seemed longer) rolled on, for me it became the hottest, longest, dirtiest parade ever! Not much joy.

Later that summer, our two girls and two others from the neighborhood spent an afternoon constructing a parade. There were tricycles with streamers, bikes with playing cards and clothes pins making noise, costumes, kazoos and even “wild animals.” Chris, Karen, Theresa and I were positioned on one side of our 40’ long driveway as the girls brought their “floats” by – one by one – then ran back past us to pick up signs, get in their next costume, etc… The parade was brief, the floats far from professional and to date, one of the best I have ever attended. Joy, anticipation, exuberance and pure unbridled happiness filled the air.

The third parade actually happened first. While our girls spent all day throwing together a simplistic, fun, unorganized joy filled parade that included a band, floats, and wild animals, one of the most famous parades of all times, while planned by the Master of the universe, seemed to have less. But, as your parents or early teachers warned you, things are not always as they seem.

Yes, the Palm Sunday parade had only one float but it is rich with imagery. Two of the disciples are sent to a village, likely Bethany to secure a donkey for Jesus to ride on. Understand, he did not NEED a donkey, the distance he was traveling (about 1000 yards) was not too great for his physicality. No.

The donkey was part of the Master’s plan that had been spoken through the prophet Zechariah hundreds of years previously. Every Jew knew the prophecy “See, your king comes to you, riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” For centuries a people looking expectantly towards this day imagined a great warrior king coming with a magnificent processional up from the Kidron Valley, through the Golden Gate and on to the Temple Mount. What people “saw” in their minds eye and what the Lord had planned were two different things.

When the “parade” started, there were very few folks around, in fact, scripture says the “crowds went ahead of him.” This description makes it feel not like the streets were lined with thousands but that a few, a dozen or more, moved with the only parade entry down the Mount of Olives and up the hill into Jerusalem. They were poorly prepared for the event, no noise makers, balloons or streamers so they made decorations as they went, throwing their cloaks down to carpet the path and waving palm branches as he passed and then they ran ahead of him to do it again.

The heart of the crowd was right. They knew that this was the parade of parades. This was the parade they and all of humanity needed. Every voice cried out the Messianic affirmation: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” The people knew – God had come to be with them, lead them, love them in the humble servant of humanity who would offer community and healing to all.

COVID 19 has created many challenges and opportunities. We are praying for many that are deep in the challenges this virus has presented to the world community. We can also pause and embrace the opportunities it provides. Left to our own devices we make a production of the Palm Sunday parade, choirs and children armed with palm branches, we would throw ourselves at the hymns we sing only on this day and with exuberance we would parade “BIG” for King Jesus.

COVID 19 has relegated our parade to personal or family matters. While hard, let’s see the beauty in this. Small parades are often the most joy filled, exuberant and authentic. This Palm Sunday the parades we have – I pray hundreds – across this community will be more authentic to our faith history than a choir cantata, bell extravaganza or praise songs with guitars, drums and energetic vocals. The opportunity we have is to be small in our parades and focused not on the pomp but on the circumstance.

The circumstance is this, no matter how isolated we feel, no matter how estranged from God or others, King Jesus comes to us. He does not come as Santa in the Macy’s parade; he comes beside you as you say “I cannot do this alone!” to make sure you understand he knows, does not expect you to go life alone and has no plan on leaving you.

Friends, that for sure makes life “doable” and for an awesome parade.

Pastor Mike

CONTACT US:

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mmorgan@marionmethodist.org

Vicki Standley  
Director of Pastoral Care  
319-310-5195  
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Weekly Update  
April 1, 2020

Not a New Idea – Just the Right One

Hosanna...
I Cannot Do This Alone
By Dietrich Bonhoeffer

O God, early in the morning I cry to you. 
   Help me to pray
And to concentrate my thoughts on you;
   All: I cannot do this alone.
In me there is darkness,
   But with you there is light;
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;
   All: I cannot do this alone.
I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;
   I am restless, but with you there is peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;
   All: I cannot do this alone.
I do not understand your ways,
   But you know the way for me….
   Restore me to liberty,
   And enable me to live now
That I may answer before you and before all people.
   All: I cannot do this alone.
Lord whatever this day may bring,
   Your name be praised.
   All: Amen

PALM SUNDAY and Food Drive

Saturday, April 4 from 9:00 am until 11:00 am, come and pick up palms for your household and bring food to benefit the Churches of Marion Food Pantry. Take a picture of your household waving your palms and send to Kelsie DeReus at kdereus@marionmethodist.org on SATURDAY to be used in Sunday Morning Worship.

Palms will be located outside the West Entrance of the Church. Leave food pantry items outside the doors for pickup.

Thank you for being a part of our Palm Sunday Worship Service

Marion Methodist is Praying

Lately I have been privileged to talk with many of you on the phone, through emails, texts and prayers and I am tremendously encouraged by the way you are reaching out to each other and connecting in all sorts of ways. Times like these are when the church really becomes what God intends for us to be: His people bringing his love and grace to those around us. We’re all finding ways to be his hands and feet in this time of uncertainty, bringing hope, joy and comfort where it’s needed most. His word is the fuel that keeps our fires burning and his power and strength give us the encouragement to see a need and met in practical and meaningful ways.

In the days ahead, I would encourage you to come up with ways you can reach out to each other. Think of those people who sit near you in church. If you know their name, call, email or text them. If you’re not sure of their name, pray for them. If you need some suggestions of people you can reach out to, get in touch with me at 319-310-5195 or vstandley@marionmethodist.org, and I’ll pass along some names so that you can write cards, send encouraging notes, whatever you’d like to come up with.

Finally, you can always pray with your church family at 6:18am or 6:18 pm. Lots of people have jumped on this invitation and God’s power will be unleashed more and more as we pray with him and each other. Good things are happening, especially when we serve God and pray.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Ephesians 6:18

Prayer Requests

1. To submit a prayer concern, request or praise, please use the Prayer button at the end of the weekly email or on the church website, www.marionmethodist.org.

2. To be on the email prayer chain to pray for others, email Vicki Standley, Director of Pastoral Care at vstandley@marionmethodist.org.
Marion Methodist,  
I was pleased to be one of the 99 faith leaders selected to be on a conference call with Governor Reynolds Tuesday, March 24th. In addition to providing a statistical analysis particularly reminding us that the number of cases will continue to rise in Iowa for a while and repeating the talking points you can find in the Gazette and elsewhere, she dug into a conversation directed at religious leaders. The conversation had three very distinct portions:

**CHURCH LIFE and STAFF**

1. The governor was very reluctant to cancel live gatherings at churches, mosques, synagogues and simply followed the CDC guidelines from 250, 100, 50 and now 10 or less people.  
   a. She hopes churches will be able to gather again soon.  
   b. (Marion Methodist is complying by these guidelines and only tech and worship leaders are in the building on Wednesday and Sunday. Custodial staff will continue to capitalize on empty buildings to shampoo carpets and strip and wax floors. Staff is best contacted by phone or email.)

2. Many churches are or will be facing or implementing reductions in staff due to sagging offerings. Many churches are in a hand-to-mouth scenario, (Marion Methodist is carefully watching our income, and our stewardship committee did deliberate on various models for nearly 30 minutes last Monday evening.) Two important things the governor touched on:  
   a. She is very aware that churches are exempt from paying unemployment (as are many religious nonprofits) thus;  
   b. She has advocated with our congresspersons and senators the granting of federal funds administrated at the state level the inclusion in the bill before congress now for loss of income payments to religious non profit workers. (this is part of the $2.2T stimulus.)

**NEEDS CHURCHES CAN FILL RIGHT NOW**

The governor who is a Christian person, advocates that we continue to bring hope to our communities and is very encouraged by the creative and exhaustive measures we are taking to connect with our congregations. Beyond caring for our congregation’s spiritual, emotional and psychological needs she asked us to continue:  

1. Filling the food banks in our localities  
2. Filling the blood banks (sign up now for our April 21 Blood drive)  
3. Offering Child Care

**HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR THE GOVERNOR?**

When asked how churches and pastors could pray for her, Governor Reynolds paused (clearly appropriately emotional on the phone) and then responded.  

1. Pray for her wisdom, guidance and discernment.  
2. Pray for grace in that in making very difficult and even well analyzed decisions some Iowans are affected negatively which is never her desire.

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**The Love Feast**

Marion Methodist very much embraces the sacrament of Holy Communion. The first Sunday of each month and on special occasions we receive the sacrament in our worship services and take time to commune with God. Our United Methodist Church takes seriously the ideal that our Elders are to institute the elements (bread and wine) during our liturgy. Because we cannot gather together, our “communion” must be managed differently this month.

GOOD NEWS – there is an alternative! You see, the primitive Methodists were served by circuit riding preachers that had parishes of large geographic areas. For instance, Marion Methodist was part of the Rock Island parish. When the pastor was present, they married, buried, baptized and served communion. When they were not, the Methodists were instructed to share what the ancient church called a “Love Feast.” We shall celebrate God’s presence and our togetherness though “physically distanced” Sunday morning, April 4.

You can research the “Love Feast” online if you desire, and/or since we can’t come by your home: **PLEASE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP BY HAVING THE FOLLOWING READY:**

- Water or juice for each person
- Bread or Sweet bread (muffins, donuts, cinnamon rolls all ok)

We look forward with joy to this new opportunity.

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**Administrative Update**

John Terry

During our hiatus from meeting as a congregation, our buildings – **5050 REC Drive and the Carnegie building** – will remain closed to the public. However, Mother Nature is marching forward on her regular schedule. So, your Landscape Committee is making plans for:

- Completing the Patio/Grill/Green Space – NW corner of our property
- Removing and storing the snow fence
- Spring maintenance of plants around the Church building
- Initial application of pre-emergent and fertilizers
- Prairie Grass Project – Next Steps - prepare the ground and plant soybeans
- And of course – staying physically distant!

The Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Trustees and Business Manager are reviewing all expenditures and monitoring our income. All purchases and payments that can reasonably be avoided or deferred are being identified and discussed.

Our approach remains the same as was communicated last week. We know things are different and will be different for some time, however, we don’t have enough detail to make any significant decisions at this time.
**Stewardship**

Alternative ways to give during this time
1. Mail offering to:
   Marion Methodist Church
   1298 7th Avenue
   Marion, IA 52302
2. Give online at www.MarionMethodist.org/give
3. Text offering to 319-313-5359
   Include $ Amount and ministry code

**Text to give Ministry Codes:**
- Operating Budget  Text GEN
- Transform Campaign  Text TRANSFORM

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**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

*Please schedule an appointment to ensure social distancing.*

Your blood drive is critical to patients in need, especially now and over the next 8 weeks. Marion Methodist is hosting a Blood Drive to help meet the need. Blood drives are not considered mass social gatherings by the CDC. Please schedule an appointment with Lisa Sparrow at lsparrow@mvrbc.org to help us ensure proper social distancing. Please sign up if you have not given since February 25th.

**Marion Methodist Blood Drive**
April 21st
11am-3pm
The Center
5050 REC Drive

Important points:
- Blood drives and donor centers are safe environments. We have reiterated our existing protocol for keeping environments safe and healthy for workers and donors and are expanding upon existing cleaning and health hygiene practices. For your safety and peace of mind, our staff will:
  - Frequently clean high-touch surfaces
  - Change gloves & sanitize hands after each donor
  - Wipe down beds, machines, and equipment after each donor
  - Safely distance donors throughout the donation process
  - Have hand sanitizer available

Thank you for helping patients in need.

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**Deaths:**

March 28: Misti Grimm, mother of Chelsea Howard

March 29: Jean Oxley

March 30: Irwin Renfer, husband of Doris Renfer and father of Jan (Marty) Schuhmacher

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**FAQ**

Our stream is strong but we cannot control how other devices receive and buffer the broadcast. Check and make sure there aren’t other devices connected to the same connection while streaming the service. If the stream is not strong, we will reach out via Facebook in real time to keep you informed.

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**LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE**

**Wednesday Nights at Marion Methodist**

6:00 pm  Christian Education Lesson for Children (and Parents) led by Dani Showalter, Director of Children’s Discipleship

6:30 pm  Pastoral Message and Bible Study led by Pastor Mike Morgan

7:30 pm  4:12 Student Ministries led by Kelsie DeReus, Director of Youth and Connectional Missions and 4:12 Leadership Team

**Sunday Morning**

10:15 am  Live Worship with Children’s Education Moment

Watch online at www.marionmethodist.org/watch-live or subscribe to our YouTube Channel
www.YouTube.com/MarionMethodistChurch

Hello families of Marion Methodist!
You’ve likely seen our Children’s Programming has gone VIRTUAL on Wednesday Evenings and Sunday Mornings. I need YOUR help bringing the message of Jesus to our congregation, and beyond…each week has a Bible passage, a Bible point, music videos and more to reinforce the message for that week. My goal is for a different family each week to “adopt” a lesson and provide the necessary elements (all virtual, of course). These elements would include: A picture of your family/kids holding a homemade poster with the Bible point, a couple of videos of your family/kids reading the assigned Bible verses, and possibly a picture or video of an accompanying Bible activity. I would coach you on how to take these pictures/videos, and how to send them to me so I can include them as a part of our lessons each week. If your family is interested in getting involved, please let me know by email at dshowalter@marionmethodist.org and I can plug you in! I look forward to hearing from you all!! Thanks in advance!

*Take a picture of your family in their “Easter Outfits” and send them to us so we can make a slideshow of everyone in their Sunday Bests for Easter Sunday. Thanks!*

Dani Showalter
Director of Children’s Discipleship
**Feeding Lunches to Youth (FLY)**

Marion Independent will still plan to distribute backpack meals for the weekends from HACAP. FLY will continue picking those up on Fridays and taking them to Marion Independent to be distributed by the schools. At this time, FLY does not have any volunteer needs, as schools are utilizing their staff and resources to meet the needs of the current feeding programs. Both FLY and Marion Cares served as advisory resources as these programs came together. As of now, FLY is on ‘standby’, ready to start respond as needs change and/or when the summer period begins.

FLY served 494 lunches over spring break week with the help of our new intern, Bailey Peterson. FLY also hired Jared Feigenbaum to serve with Bailey for the summer FLY period. We are excited to have such qualified and passionate candidates for this crucial ministry.

**4:12 Weekly Calendar:**

- Every day @ 8:00 am will be daily encouragement via Instagram Live.
- **Mondays:** Game Hour via Zoom 4:00pm and TikTok Challenge Released
- **Tuesdays:** Instagram Live Devotion 10:00am
- **Wednesdays:** Large Group Meeting 7:30 pm and Small Group meeting (Your small group leader will have your zoom information)
- **Thursdays:** Instagram Live Devotion 1:30pm
- **Friday:** Tik Toks due
- **Saturday:** 4:12 Tik Challenge Posted and Zoom Live Hangout 8:00pm
- **Sunday:** Instagram Live Devotion 8:00pm

All Zoom hangout codes and links will be sent out via text reminder from the Remind App. Parents to receive the Link/Code please text 81010 and use this message: @412PAlerts

For your students to get notifications about upcoming gatherings have them text 81010 and use this message: @412hsms. If you have any questions, please contact Kelsie DeReus at kdereus@marionmethodist.org.

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**Marion Independent**

Starting Mar. 24 breakfast/lunch pick up will begin. Grab and go meals will be distributed from 6:30-8:30AM (VMS only) or 10-12:00PM (Longfellow, Starry, FMI, VMS). To help alleviate any congregating at the sites, we request that a Parent pick up the meals by driving to the front of the school building, and if there is a line of cars, remaining in your vehicle.

**Marion Food Pantry**

Our partners at the food pantry are preparing take-home boxes for pickups on Thursdays from 1-3pm. Donations are able to made directly to the food pantry between 8:30 and 9:30am or at the church from 7:00am-4:00pm. Additional volunteers are not needed at this time in order to limit exposure, but as the situation and needs continue to evolve, we will be ready to respond.

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**Adult Discipleship: Staying Connected Through Zoom**

Thank you to our Bible Study and Small Group leaders for their extra efforts to connect with their groups through Zoom. It has been so great to see each of you as you log in and start your studies.

If you are a small group leader and you have not been contacted yet, please email me at jdigmann@MarionMethodist.org. I would be happy to help you get started and reconnect with your group through Zoom.

All are invited to join Pastor Mike Morgan for the Wednesday Night Bible study at 6:30PM through our website www.MarionMethodist.org/watch-live or our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/MarionMethodistChurch.
LENTEN MOMENTS 2020
MONDAY, APRIL 6
Carolyn Quimby
I’ve been a member of Marion Methodist since 1996. Jay and I were married on January, 1997 in the Chapel, by Pastor Stan Wierson. We have four children (Kim, Brad, Kyle and Matt) and six grandchildren. I grew up on a farm east of Atkins, IA. I am now retired from Toyota Financial Services after 17 years. I was diagnosed with MS when I was 30.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7
Adam Britton
I’m from western Kentucky and graduated college from Murray State University in 2004 with a degree in Occupational Safety & Health. After college I started working for Cargill Inc, starting in Cedar Rapids, relocating to Cleveland, OH then Minneapolis, MN. I’m currently Environmental Health and Safety Manager at DuPont Nutrition & Biosciences in Cedar Rapids. My wife Sarah and I joined Marion Methodist when we moved to Marion from the Twin Cities area in 2013. We have two rambunctious boys, Will (9) and Everett (6), that love attending church and helping to bring energy to our congregation. I’ve been involved as a Sunday school teacher with Sarah, am currently serving my second year on the Stewardship & Finance Committee, and am a Director with the Tech Team. For the past two years I’ve been part of a small group that meets at the church at 6:30 on Monday mornings.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8
Echo Wecker
I am married to my high school sweetheart; Josh, and we have two daughters. Zoey (15) is a Freshman at Marion High School, Molly (12) is in 7th grade at Vernon Middle School. We also have two rescue dogs, Freckles and Dennis. We have been members of the church for 12 years. I am currently involved in the Decorations ministry and enjoy helping with the Tech ministry. I was a member of a team that went to Haiti in 2018. When the girls were younger, I was involved in the Children’s ministry and had been a 4:12 High school small group leader for several years. I tried learning to play handbells at one time also! I really enjoy the family we have found at Marion Methodist. I work full time for the Cedar Rapids School District as an Accounting Specialist. In my downtime I enjoy hiking, riding my trike, dancing, craft projects and watching movies. I LOVE Football (especially the Hawkeyes) and cheering on my kids in all their adventures!

THURSDAY, APRIL 9
Eddie Rose
I live in Marion with my wife Amanda. We have two sons, Chandler, age 9 and Emmett, age 6. I am a home inspector and own my own small business, Linn Inspection. I’ve been an active member at Marion Methodist, serving within the youth ministries of 4:12 and Confirmation, as well as Church Council and Staff-Parish Relations committees. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, especially outdoors - camping, boating, and cycling.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10
Reece Roling
My name is Reece Roling. I’m a Senior at Linn-Mar High School and have been an official student at Marion Methodist for little over a year. I am involved in athletics such as football and baseball, and I am involved in clubs such as SODA, TRY and Lean On Me. I would love to share my story with you on April 10th!

Join us in the online at 7:00 am
YouTube.com/MarionMethodistChurch

GOOD FRIDAY
April 10
7:00 PM
MarionMethodist.org/Watch-Live
or on our YouTube Channel

LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE
Wednesday Nights at Marion Methodist

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