When someone has made a positive life change and it's noticeable I enjoy affirming them and encouraging them to continue. Often, I like to hear the story of their decision-making process and what steps they have taken in the journey.

Recently it was clear that one of our Marion Methodist friends had transformed their body in a significant way. Being a pastor, first I asked, "are you OK?" Once they said "yes," then we began a conversation about the change. It went pretty much like this.

"What made you decide to lose weight?"

"For one, I wanted to get back to the size I was in college and secondly my back and knees were really giving me problems. Didn't take a genius to realize I should lose weight."

"Wow, well what's the secret?"

"No secret, I just followed what I had heard a hundred times before – eat right and exercise more."

"Really?"

"Yes, really – no excess anything, just simple eating less and moving around a bit. Just like our health teachers and every fitness guru ever has said – because it works Pastor Mike, it works!"

I have heard that a hundred times. My friend Pete Kowalichek (an alternate for the decathlon on the '84 Olympic team) has made a life preaching and teaching "eat right and exercise more. " He consistently says "80% is the fork 20% is exercise and 0% is crazy unsustainable programs. The only actual program a normal person can sustain is eat right exercise more."

So many things in life come that way; through advice repeated over and over again – because it works!

My carpentry friends all know the expression "measure twice, cut once." The measure twice mindset simply means that a little thinking saves a lot of fixing. While I have watched tradesmen and women at our new building project it is clear by the number of times they pull out a tape measure or take a second look at a blueprint that the old advice works.

The physical world is a first cousin to the spiritual. More times than once every pastor has been asked, how do I get closer to God, how do I make peace with God? Every time that question comes, they have heard the response before – because it works (when taken to heart).

While many programs have been written and used in churches and by individuals, they typically boil down to what we've heard a hundred times – because it works. So, if you are looking to get close to God, here's my (and many before me) advice.

1. Spend Time with God. Never has anyone ever built a strong relationship with another without spending time with them. The reality is that intimacy builds through time and communication. God grants us both in the gift of prayer. If you want to get closer to God, spend time speaking and listening to Him and just like every other relationship intimacy will grow.

2. Learn God's Ways. The Holy Scriptures are the story of God and God's people. In them we find God's description of Himself and the ways of life that are best and holy. They are not mysterious, not written in code, not only granted to Pastors or priests or accessible by the 'best of the best'. No, the Bible is God's way of expressing his personality to us, and if we want to know him, all we need to do is study Scripture.

3. Get with God's people. God loves people and God loves it when we get together. Knowing God is a personal relationship that is best worked out among others in relationship with Him. This is the nature of the church and the church exists to build up the believers in faith for the facing of the challenges of this world.

I know, I know – you've heard all this before, but that's only because it works.

The question for you of course is – are you working it?

Pastor Mike
Thank you!

Dear friend of Marion Cares,

This was a busy year and we saw God moving in so many ways! We have continued sharing the Gospel with kids in Marion through our afterschool program SHINE (Seeking Him In Neighborhoods Everywhere). This is a neighborhood-specific program hosted at Marion Village and Squaw Creek mobile home communities. On one particular afternoon, one middle school girl learned about the resurrection of Christ for the very first time. This is one of many stories demonstrating the importance of our mission to share the life-changing love of Jesus!

This year, we also supported families in need through our seasonal projects. These projects distributed many necessities throughout the year.

- 350 backpacks
- 180 sets of winter clothing items
- 90 Thanksgiving meals
- 1,161 Christmas gifts

In July, we celebrated 10 years of doing ministry in Marion by hosting an outdoor celebration called Uplift Uptown. We had 6 different musical groups from local churches play while we had food and family-friendly yard games. There were an estimated 500 people in attendance and we are excited to announce that we will host the second annual Uplift Uptown this coming summer!

As we look forward to expanding our reach in Marion in 2018, we want to THANK YOU so much for your support in 2017. Your donations have directly influenced many lives in so many ways, some that simply cannot be measured. The mission to share Christ's love with families in our community is only possible through the faithful and generous giving of many churches, businesses, and individuals – just like you! YOU are doing good and changing lives right in your community.

Micah 6:8 No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

On behalf of the children and families whose lives have been blessed in the last year because of your generous support, please accept our heartfelt thanks and may God bless you.

Yours in Christ,
Laura Campbell
Marion Cares Executive Director
**What’s Next?**

**Crosses in the New Church Building**

Two of the primary visual focal points in our new facility will be the cross near the main entrance, and the cross in the Sanctuary.

The exterior cross will sit atop a 46 foot tall spire, located near the east entrance. The cross itself will be nearly 20 feet tall, by 6 feet wide. When mounted to the spire, the entire structure will extend nearly 60 feet above the ground. It will be a clear indicator that this is a house of God to all who pass nearby on Highway 13, 29th Avenue, and 35th Avenue. The aluminum structure will be lighted from within, so the cross will remain visible day or night.

The roughly 20 feet tall by 7 feet wide cross in the Sanctuary will be mounted on the north wall. This cross will be constructed of oak with an aluminum inlay. It has been designed to match the altar, baptismal font, podium, and some of the other furnishings on the Chancel. The cross will be backlit, and the lights will be integrated into the audio visual system to match the other lighting in the Sanctuary.

**Construction Update - Day 201**

**It’s an Inside Job**

Often when you hear that phrase – it’s not good. It means that something is going wrong.

But in this case – something is going right – in fact – many things are going GREAT!

In this kind of weather, an old joke is, “I’m glad I have an inside job”. That is very true at the construction site for our new building. Work continues inside. The floor has been poured. Classroom walls and door frames are in place. Heating ducts are in place. Drywall is being hung.

You can start to visualize classrooms, closets, and bathrooms. Electrical outlets have been placed in the walls and windows are framed. The shape, size and height of the Narthex is becoming a reality.

Our current sermon series is “The Big Move”. Just as we are preparing to move – many people are working full time, every day to prepare the place we are moving to.

John Terry, Construction Coordinator

Clockwise from upper left
- Heating ducts
- Concrete being poured
- Drywall being hung
- Walls in place
- Where does everything go?

**Save the Date!**

**Vacation Bible School**

June 25 to June 29

More information to come!

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**Do you receive the weekly 4:12 e-newsletter?**

Sign up at [www.MarionMethodist.org/learn/youth](http://www.MarionMethodist.org/learn/youth) to keep up to date with activities related to youth at Marion Methodist.

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**Check-Ins**

**Sunday School Child Check-In**

Located in Room 206

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**TV Broadcast**

Marion Methodist worship services are typically rebroadcasted on Mediacom or ImOn Channel 4 at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings. There is a multiweek delay between when a sermon is preached and when it airs on TV.
**Summer Ministry Internships Available**

Four full time paid summer positions are available at Marion Methodist.

- **Summer Ministry Intern** - a position that gains experience in a number of areas of ministry. This job is perfect for persons considering full time ministry.
- **Worship Ministry Intern** - a position that gains experience and explores music ministry in the local church. This job is perfect for persons interested in music ministry as a career or avocation.
- **Feeding Lunch to Youth (FLY) Intern** - two positions that assist in volunteer management, advertising, fund raising, food ordering, meal preparation and delivery.

Full job descriptions are available at www.MarionMethodist.org/available-positions/jobs. Persons interested in applying should submit a letter of interest and resume by mail or email no later than February 19, 2018 to the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

Staff Parish Relations Committee
c/o First United Methodist Church
1298 7th Ave.
Marion, Iowa 52302

Questions should be directed to John Terry at jterry@marionmethodist.org or call 319-377-4856.

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**Pantry Partners for Marion Food Pantry**

We help folks in need by supplying items for the Marion Churches Food Pantry. You may bring the following items to church any time during each month. Please put your contributions in one of the grocery carts located in the Narthex or at the 8th Avenue glass doors, or in the Mission Depot in Fellowship Hall or the Church Office.

- January: Macaroni and Cheese
- February: Canned Fruit
- March: Peanut Butter
- April: Macaroni and Cheese
- May: Toilet Tissue
- June: Soup

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**Our Congregation Shares Its Concern & Christian Love...**

**DEATHS:**
January 4: Wanda Sellers, mother of Shelby (Walt) Roth. Family includes granddaughter Courtney Roth.

January 14: Tom Meek, father of Collette Glueck

**BIRTHS:**

**WEDDINGS:**

**Questions should be directed to John Terry at jterry@marionmethodist.org or call 319-377-4856.**

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**The Marion Methodist newsletter deadline**

**schedule**

Articles for our Marion Methodist need to be submitted by due date at 12:00 PM. You may email them to: jwildman@marionmethodist.org with [newsletter] in the subject line. Please send any information or images as an attachment. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call or bring to the office items to be published. We ask that you honor the deadlines listed below:

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<tr>
<th>Date Arrived in Mail</th>
<th>Date Articles Due</th>
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**Thank you!**

I want to thank Pastor Mike and the Marion Methodist Congregation for allowing me to represent us on the Churches of Marion Food Pantry Board of Directors. The work and mission serving those who are food insecure was rewarding to say the least. I am confident that the board is in good hands as the work moves forward!! Two things are important to recognize at this point in time:

1. The Marion Methodist Women and other bakers in our church hit it out of the park again this year with 150 plates of Christmas cookies for our clients. We get a big thumbs up when we share them!! I hope we have started a tradition! May God continue to bless this effort.

2. I have some time to devote to the pantry effort and are not already engaged in the work please consider joining the effort. Like us on Facebook at The Churches of Marion Food Pantry. You may also contact Karen at the First Presbyterian Church by calling 319-377-7309 and she will direct your call to the appropriate person in the pantry.

In Christ,

Gary Frederick