Certainly, in seminary I was encouraged to demythologize the downplayed, or even rejected God’s direct and dramatic work in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. “She continues; “Twentieth up in churches where there was never an informative teaching on we need to own and grieve…Many United Methodists have grown with the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, and that is something Methodist Future Carolyn Moore in Firm Foundation: Hope and Vision for a New Movement. “The Methodist Movement has lost touch with the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, and that is something we need to own and grieve…Many United Methodists have grown up in churches where there was never an informative teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.” She continues: “Twentieth century Methodism was strongly affected by theological currents that downplayed, or even rejected God’s direct and dramatic work in the lives of men and women.”

Certainly, in seminary I was encouraged to demythologize the miracles and paid tuition to be taught that God would not or could not act in the miraculous ways we see in the Bible. This was counter to my experience (some of which I have shared with you) and the experience of my church and friends. In fact, seminarians who taught like mine that the miracles were fables, stories, encouragement were at best wrong. The nature of God is miraculous, potent, powerful, eternal, life giving, joy inspiring, not just a presence of good life lessons – if that is all God is – Mr. Rogers would have sufficed.

No, the Wesley brothers knew – they knew that the very thing that would power us through the dark night of life was extraordinary, supernatural and of human construction. They also did not believe that you could wrangle the Holy Spirit. Their own experiences accounted for this as both were in their thirties and already preaching BEFORE they met the Holy Spirit they believed transformed them. That Spirit made possible the largest and fastest growing revival to spread across America two hundred years ago.

The Spirit has not left – but we and the United Methodist Church may have left it. Recent generations, consumed with the need for certainty and control took the bellows away from the fire and closed the door to the wind of the Spirit that once blew through our denomination. Our decline is directly related to our trust in, teaching of, and hope in the Holy Spirit.

The answer to the question, “Where has the Holy Spirit gone?” is -nowhere. It is here, ready to ignite your faith, willing to blow across the desert of your soul and fill your life with the presence and intimate relationship with God. Every human and our beloved church need to depend on the Spirit that is right here! One thing is required of us: to engage with the Holy Spirit. Humble Invitation.

Nicky Gumbel the main presenter of the ALPHA Course encourages us by saying, “The Holy Spirit is a gentleman who never goes where uninvited and always responding to the humble invitation of a longing heart.” Friends, I plead with you, invite that Holy Spirit into your life with a heart willing to go as the Spirit leads. Then I promise you, life will get better, will be filled with wonder, and you will receive a spirit of peace and confidence unlike any you could wish upon yourself. Plus, if you do, our church will be transformed!

Pastor Mike
Bishop Laurie on the District
April 7th, 2 pm.
St. Mark's UMC in Iowa City
Commission on a Way Forward Conversations
Bishop Laurie will be present to facilitate conversation around the Commission on a Way Forward. A commission was formed at the 2016 General Conference to help our denomination discern a way to remain united in the midst of our differences around human sexuality. The session will include a devotion, a video dialogue by two of our clergy who have differing views, and opportunities for table conversations and questions.

Register Online for Summer Games University
sgu.camp

SAVE THE DATE
Our first school bag sewing day in the new building is set for Friday, July 27th. We’ll be cutting, pressing, pinning and sewing school bags from 9:00 – 3:00, with lunch served. Mark your calendars now to be sure and come, to see how things will work in our new space. More information will follow as the date gets closer.

Marion Methodist Commission on the Way Forward Report
March 19, 2018
The United Methodist Church has struggled for many years with concerns of how to be most faithful regarding human sexuality. Various juridical bodies of the church are struggling with how to guide the church forward, as it is clear that the general church (worldwide) is not of one mind.

Marion Methodist endeavors to be a leader in our denomination and because of the rich depth of our love for each other, Christ, and his Church, we do not feel as if it is faithful to be passive in this conversation. We also strive to provide a model for other congregations questioning how to start the conversation, without polarizing the numerous “sides.”

During the March 20, 2017 Church Council meeting, it was discerned that our best way forward would be to name our own commission. This commission would parallel the one working on behalf of the general church to pray, be informed, educated, and faithfully converse regarding our faithful witness in matters regarding human sexuality. Nominations were taken from the floor (and beyond) that evening and the decision was made to confidentially interview the persons nominated in hopes of constructing a “balanced” commission.

The commission members were: Bill Stevens, Luann Byerly, Jen Digmann, Andrea Kearns, Tim Atwood, Jen McDonald, Ron Knapp, and Mike Bray. They were joined by Church Council Chair Ryan Colerick and Pastor Mike Morgan.

The commission initially met a few times to learn more about one another, discuss our faith, and begin to develop the trust and openness required to have the strong dialogue and debate needed to push us forward. The team then reviewed and discussed literature considered conservative/traditional, liberal/progressive, and center/moderate. After each piece, a discussion was held where components of the document were discussed in terms of items we agreed with and disagreed with. The discussion and views were far from black and white, but maintained a focus on scripture, a love for each other, and the mission of our church.

After faithful service, thought, and prayer, the commission has unanimously come back to Church Council with the following statement and position for the Way Forward. Additionally, a partial list of key questions, with answers, is included.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church is the instrument that sets forth the laws, plans, policy and process by which United Methodists govern themselves. These paragraphs are added to the report of the Commission on a Way Forward at the direction of the Church Council which met March 18, 2018 to help resource congregational members.

§ 161F) Human Sexuality
We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We invite families and churches not to reject or condone lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

See Judicial Council Decision 702.

§ 304.3 Qualifications for Ordination
While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

1. “Self-avowed practicing homosexual” is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a denomination that they are a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decision 702.

2. The commission on the way forward was not able to craft a language that would pass through the commission. As a result, the current language in the Book of Discipline is retained.

§ 2701.1 Chargeable Offenses
A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference ($ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diocesan minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in § 2702.41) with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage;** (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies; ………….
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.

**Meal Schedule:**
- 4/11 - Firehouse Subs
- 4/18 - Dairy Queen

**Powerhouse** meets every Wednesday. From 5:45 pm to 6:15 pm we have a Family Meal (Free Will Offering) and from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm we have activities for all ages.

**Preschoolers:**
Kids may forget what you say - but they remember what they discover on their own. Get them “Hands On” with God’s Word. (Room 205)

**Kindergarten - 5th Grade:**
Meet a Jesus that is real and relevant in your everyday life! Discover Jesus in you. (Room 303/305)

**4:12 Youth Group:**
Junior High Worship 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm (Sanctuary). High School Worship 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm (Sanctuary).

**Adult Classes:**
Come for a midweek boost. Check out classes at www.marionmethodist.org

**Nursery:**
Offered in the Nursery room located near the elevators

**Sunday School Child Check-In** located in Room 206

**Art in the Old Building**
Most of the artwork in our current building will not be displayed or even taken to our new building. You may have appreciated a piece of art or banner hanging in our Wesley Hall and they have meant a great deal to your spiritual walk. Knowing that most of it is not traveling to 5050 REC Dr. (some is and some is going to Carnegie ) and you hope not to see it in a rummage sale or dumpster and have a home for it, please contact Pastor Mike Morgan, mmorgan@marionmethodist.org or call 319.377.4856 and ask about the piece you might want.

**Statement and Position for the Way Forward**
Marion First United Methodist Church
March 19, 2018
Marion First United Methodist is an open and welcoming church for all who seek a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. As such, we accept, with love, all individuals who come to our church. If people feel called to become a member, they will be accepted and share in all responsibilities and be a part of our fellowship. This would include recognition of their civil and religious unions and acceptance of their families. The church and its leadership will follow The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church concerning sexual ethics.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**
1. **Should homosexuals be welcomed in church?**
   Yes, all individuals or couples would be welcomed.
2. **Should homosexuals be welcomed into membership?**
   Yes, all individuals or couples would be welcomed into membership.
3. **Should homosexuals be allowed to teach or participate in Sunday school, 4:12, puppets etc?**
   Yes, all volunteers are required to follow and adhere to the rules and policies that are already set forth for working with children in the church.
4. **Should homosexual unions be acknowledged in our church?**
   By members yes, we expect all members to respect and acknowledge all civil and religious unions. As a United Methodist Church we would refer to The Book of Discipline.
5. **Should homosexuals be wed in our church?**
   The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church does not allow these unions to be performed by our pastors or in our churches. We are bound to abide by that and will refer to The Book of Discipline.
6. **Should the children of homosexuals be baptized in our church?**
   Yes.
7. **Should we receive homosexual pastors in our church?**
   We would refer to The Book of Discipline.
8. **Should we follow the guidelines set forth by The Book of Discipline?**
   Yes.
9. **What resources as a committee did you use?**
   a. Critical to the Committee was finding resources that the current “positions” represented in our church would feel represented fairly, intelligently, graceful and lovingly their position. Five main resources and The Book of Discipline were selected to resource our commission.
   i. Homosexuality and the Church (Guidance for Community Conversation) by Howard A. Snyder
   ii. What does the Bible Say about Homosexuality (Answering Gay Revisionist Theology) Focus on the Family
   iii. The Gay Debate: The Bible and Homosexuality by Matthew Vines
   iv. Does God have a plan for same Sex relationships by Andrew Lang
   v. Is There a Way Forward? By Walter Fenton (which defines the “three” current positions in the church)
10. **How did you arrive at these resources?**
    Materials were selected in consultation with various elders in the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist who publicly support a moderate, conservative or progressive position and were willing to guide a church faithfully seeking a conversation.

**Open houses for our new church**
We will be hosting 2 Open Houses at the new church: one for our Marion Methodist congregation, and one for the greater community.

Dates have not been set for either one, so be watching your Marion Methodist newsletter and Tuesday email for more information.
**Our Congregation Shares Its Concern & Christian Love**

**DEATHS:**
- March 22: Hadwen Rose, daughter of Adam and Maggie Michels. Grandparents are Tim and Kim Michels. Great-Grandmother is Ruth Collins

**WEDDINGS:**
- March 25: Iris Amelia Hart, daughter of Shara and Kyle Hart.

**Construction Update - Day 271**

**A Plan Comes Together**

This is exactly what is happening at 5050 REC Drive. Our new church building is coming together! You can easily count the weeks left on both hands—this is big news.

The outside hasn’t changed much over the winter, but the inside is vastly different, and yes—the plan is coming together. Interior doors are being installed. And changing a light bulb never looked like this in our current building.

Clockwise from upper left:
- Gas ranges and double ovens
- Solid wood doors ready to hang
- Refrigerator and freezer units
- Changing light bulbs

Now that’s a Plan!

John Terry, Construction Coordinator

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**The Marion Methodist newsletter deadline schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Arrived in Mail</th>
<th>Date Articles Due</th>
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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.

**April**
- Macaroni and Cheese
- May: Toilet Tissue
- June: Soup
- July: Macaroni and Cheese
- August: Peanut Butter
- September: Soup

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

**What’s Next?**

1. **“The Center”** is the name of the main gathering area. Calling it “The Center” is directional (i.e. it’s located in the center of the church) and not confusing like “narthex” so, we look forward to coffee and cookies and conversation in “The Center” every Sunday morning!

2. Signs are important and expensive. Currently the Building Committee is negotiating with a local sign company regarding a sign facing highway 13 and smaller ones at the REC Dr. and 35th Ave. entrance way.

3. **Storage Rooms** - the Building Committee, Trustees and our various ministries are working together to assign and organize our storage rooms in ways that our ministries can be well served.

4. The **G.A.R. Window** – because our historic facility was built just 40 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, a memorial window to the Grand Army of the Republic was placed in our sanctuary. While the large “Peace” portion of this window will be displayed outside the building, the lower “medallion” will hang at the west end of “The Center” (to capture natural light and be close to our memory wall) in a frame constructed by one of our congregational craftsmen.

5. **Removable Stairs** – the center aisle of the sanctuary will end at the front of the stage except on days when we have a wedding or special program that calls for center steps. On those days, doors on the stage will be open and a beautiful set of oak steps with a carpet runner will pull out for use.

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**New Yard Signs Available!!**

New yard signs with a new community message and stronger stands are available to put in your yard. Share with the community that Marion Methodist is moving to 5050 REC Drive.