

**JANUARY 2021
CLARION CONNECTION
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
201 3RD AVENUE NE
CLARION, IA 50525**

**Pastor: Rev. Mike Gudka
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Website: www.clarionumc.com**

Secretary: Jodi Kraft
Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Email: jodi@clarionumc.com

Church Treasurer: Sam Moore
Financial Secretary: Jodi Kraft
Church Council Chair: Bud Young

Custodians: Carol Townsend and Juliet Gudka

Keep up with Happenings in Our Church

If you are a Facebook user, search for "Clarion First United Methodist Church" and join our page. That way you will keep up with current happenings at our Church. In addition, check out our website at <https://www.clarionumc.com> (no "f") and look at past teachings, see what is on the Church calendar, and lots more.

Friendly Reminder from Staff Parish Relations Committee

Please remember that Mondays are the one day a week that Pastor Mike tries to save for rest and recuperation. In the event that an emergency, Pastor Mike would still like for you to contact him.

New Birthday Ministry - Do We have your current address?

We are starting a new Birthday Card Ministry and we hope to offer you a little love and recognition on your birthday. If you don't receive a birthday card, it could be because we don't have your date or birth, or we don't have your current address. Please contact Jodi in the Church office and make sure your information is correct. And when your big day comes around - HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

NEW! Way to Worship!

We now offer three ways to join your Church family in worship. And our prayers are that you will stay connected with your Church home and find the worship service that works best for your situation:

- **In-Person Worship**: Sunday's at 10:30 AM with alternating worship styles - Social Distancing Policy is in place.
- **Recorded Worship**: This is available on our website by Tuesday of each Week at www.clarionumc.com.
- **NEW! Live-Streaming Worship**: Join us live on our Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/ClarionFirstUnitedMethodistChurch/>.

Let's all stay connected. Let's lift each other up. And let's continue to be The Body of Christ!





January 2021 Newsletter Article

Happy New Year!

For many people the beginning of the New Year is a time to reflect on what happened last year, maybe learn from it a bit, and begin to think about what might be ahead in the coming year. And when I talk to people about what they hope for in the New Year, most people say, *"Anything that happens in 2021 has to be better than what happened in 2020!"*

But what if 2021 was not just better than 2020? What if 2021 was so wonderful that it would blow 2020 away?

And what if I told you that in order to make this happen, all you had to do was to take a nine inch journey in 2021.

Let me back up a little and set some groundwork for what I mean. For many decades, Christianity has been a cerebral endeavor. In other words, to become a Christian was a matter for the brain. We focused upon affirming our faith through Bible studies, Creeds, and vows. We learned what was right and what was wrong. And we worked hard to get it right.

Now there is nothing wrong with learning about Christianity. In fact God expects us to do this and this is the reason that He gave us the written Bible. But when we stop with only having an intellectual exercise of knowing the faith, we miss out on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. And this transformation occurs experientially in the heart. Yes the heart; that wonderful place that is about nine inches below our brains.

To truly know Christ, is to experience Him in the deepest of ways. This means taking what we have learned and allow the Holy Spirit to unleash God's power and love in our lives. It means to be made brand new through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and being completely transformed and born again through the power of God's amazing grace.

When I went through seminary, it required 92 credit hours, or about four or more years to complete. I know doctorate programs that are completed with much lower credit hour requirements. And as I watched members of my class, I saw how many of them came into seminary all fired up for Christ and with a clear purpose of what they were called to do. But then as the class hours piled up, with the requirement to intellectualize hundreds of theological books (I graduated with over 600 theological books that were required to be purchased for my classes), completing thousands of pages of written theological papers, and as the years went by, I saw them actually intellectualized in a way that killed their spirit. We had no classes on the Holy Spirit, no examination of miraculous healings, and there was no room for the speaking of tongues. And this my friends is exactly why many of our Churches are dead. The Pastor only stays in his/her head, s/he tries and duplicate every theological understanding into intellectual terms for the congregation, and there is no expectation for the experiential transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, it is as if the Holy Spirit has been asked to leave the Church building.

But this is NOT what we are about. Of course there is place for intellectual understanding. God gave us this powerful brain and He expects us to use it. But when we stop by simply coming to worship expecting ONLY to learn something new, then we miss the very essence of who we are...or maybe I should say, we miss the experience of fully understanding whose we are.

So as you think about the year ahead, I don't want you to settle for things getting just a little better in your life. I want you to listen to Jesus when He is encouraging His Disciples to ask for the Holy Spirit to come into their hearts in **Matthew 7:7-8**: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

And the greatest gift that the Father can give you is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life because of your belief in Christ.

In 2021, I want you to continue reading the Bible and learning about the Truth. AND I encourage you to keep asking, seeking, and knocking for God to empower you to take that nine inch journey and turn 2021 into the year when 2020 was simply blown away by the power and love of God that is in your heart.

God bless,
Pastor Mike

January Birthdays and *Anniversaries*

- 3 – Marlene Brown
- 5 – Jim Morford
- 7 – Kennedy Trca
- 8 – Alexandria Hackley, Teryl Marker
- 10 – Gavin Disney, Indy Johnson
- 11 – Luke Maxheimer
- 12 – Miriam Jensen, Charlotte Johnson
- 13 – Brenna Harklau, Hannah Leist
- 14 – Chad Disney
- 15 – Laura Beenken, Pam Smith
- 16 – Jenna Clutter
- 17 – Deb Geary, Sandra Larick, Amelia McOllough, Jean Snively
- 18 – Katy Warnke, Dan Carey
- 22 – Bryce Rasmussen
- 26 – Manie Nel Sr.
- 27 – Sara Abbas
- 28 – Kasey Adams, Raven Kinnetz
- 29 – Craig Warnke
- 30 – Darren Johnson
- 31 – Mark Bernhardt, Taylor Beenken

Happy Birthday and *Happy Anniversary* to all!

Note: If your birthday or *anniversary* is not listed, or we have the date wrong, Please contact the church secretary.

January, February and March Quarterly Committees

January Co-chairpersons: Nikki and Tom Conlon, Judy Kirstein

February Co-chairpersons: Carolyn and Dennis Bowman, Cathy and Jeff Farwell

March Co-chairpersons: Janice and Dennis Murphy, Bonnie and Bud Young

Additional Committee persons:

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|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| June and Allyn Christensen | Bill Drury |
| Deb and Mike Geary | Casey Howell |
| Deb and Gary Keller | Kim and Tim Marker |
| Jamie and Chance Wahl | Nancy and Paul Ahlstrom |
| Kristine and Robert Ahrens | Cindy and Jim Dorn |
| Abby and Dean Kirstein | Deanna and Kevin Lehman |
| Holly and Steve Martin | EI Marie and Manie Nel |
| Troy Schultz | Anna and Tyler Warnke |
| Jill and Jeremy Campbell | Shirley and Steve Hill |
| Micki and Chad Disney | Kim and Kirk Disney |
| Rosa and Jorge Martinez | Joella Steffenson |
| Nora and Brandon Thompson | Allison and Austin Warnke |
| Andy Young | Kelly and Kent Kirstein |
| Renee and Tony Holmes | Logan Holmes |



In loving memory of Joel Renteria, Jr., (son), Todor Basarboliev (Ania's dad), Marcos Estrada (foster son), from Ania & Joel Renteria.

In loving memory of Robert Rauch, from his family, Mom, Dad and Sisters.

In loving memory of Hugh Townsend, from Carol Townsend.

In memory of all the lives that have been lost to COVID, from Pam Brockman.

In loving memory of my late, loving husband Lloyd Hill, from Karen Hill.

In loving memory of Vern Elston, from Maureen, Scot and Marti Elston and family, Tim and Shelley Fletcher and family, Steve and Kerry Elston and family.

In loving memory of Roger Beenken, Don and Shirley Marker, from Kim and Tim Marker and family.

In loving memory of Donna's parents Frank and Wilma Taylor and brother-in-law Lory Johnson, from Donna and Robert Miller.

In loving memory of Bill and Lorraine Young, Deanna Stock, Howard Darbyshire, from Bonnie and Bud Young and family.

In honor of all essential workers during this past year. Thank you! From Dennis and Janet Hennigar and family.