



The First Word

July 2026

First United Methodist Church, Racine

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Pastor's page

The Declaration of Independence was signed two hundred fifty years ago. I do not know when the last time you heard or read this document penned by our founding fathers. It has been a minute for me. So, I decided to read it this past week. I thought you might like to read it as well.

This document was a complaint against the King of England. It declares our right to govern ourselves. It is a stand against tyranny of the king. After reading it with eyes of the current authoritarian culture, I understand the "No Kings" movement with appreciation for those taking a stand to keep us free.

As followers of Christ, steeped in the Wesleyan way, I believe we have an obligation to speak in defense of those who are marginalized, the ones who have no voice. I was raised in the United Methodist church. Social justice was taught in Sunday School, preached from the pulpit. I know no other way of being.

It is with that filter that I reread the Declaration of Independence. I am not making a political statement, I am raising the concern for the deeper spiritual issue at work in today's world and in particular the United States. I think about the phrase popularized in the eighties, "What Would Jesus Do?"

What would Jesus say in response to the current treatment of people who are not white men? More importantly what action do you think he would take?

We are commissioned to be the hands and feet of Christ. How are we responding to that call? So many good questions. I do not confess to have all the answers. Each of us has the responsibility to search our heart and make a decision to do what ever it is we are called to do.

I pray that we choose to follow Jesus each day and live out his teachings. May it be so.

WORSHIP THEMES FOR JULY

July 5 "Compassion, Conflict and Peace"
Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 24:3-8

July 12 Guest Preacher Luis Chavarria

July 19 "Faith With Eager Longing"
Psalm 139, Romans 8:12-25

July 26 "More than Conqueror's"
Psalm 105 Romans 8:26-39

Book Study

Join Pastor Christal for a book study in the Reep Room on Fridays at 10:00 am. We are reading "Building Beloved Community – The Courage to Love in the Face of Tyranny". This book was written by the United Methodist Council of Bishops. In the foreword to the book, Bishop Dan Schwerin says, "We know the schemes of an authoritarian playbook. Create an enemy that can serve as a tool and diversion when legal norms begin to disappear. Use misinformation. Sow confusion. Control educators. Weaken schools. Dismantle the arts. Rewrite history to favor the authoritarian. Attack the press. Undermine the courts. Support your harm with the help of religious authorities hungry for scraps from the table of power. Rig the election process. Divide families. Turn in your neighbor. Demonize the opposition. Govern with iron."

This book, "invites us to explore the intersection of Wesleyan faith and the urgent realities of rising authoritarianism. It is not a partisan project or a political agenda – it is a spiritual invitation. It is rooted in the conviction that understanding is not enough. We are called to be agents of transformation, witnesses to Christ's love, and builders of beloved community, I pray that this resource will help us deepen our understanding of Christian hope."

If this call resonates with you, come join us as we discern our call. There will be no class on July 10 and August 21st.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN JULY!

2 - Denise Ferguson
4 - Robert Pischke
6 - Judith Schulz
11 - Karen Burlingame
12 - Tyler Olson
14 - Ricky Castro
15 - Juneau Toutant
17 - Ed Guckenberger
19 - Carol Feest
Cyril Thiel
27 - Dee Feest
29 - Buxton Toutant
30 - Amanda Schnaare
31 - Paul Nejedly



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN JULY!

20 - Pete & Carol Feest
21 - Jim & Janet Rosellini
29 – Austin & Erika Feest



FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

Our item for July for the Food Pantries will be juice; in August we will be collecting cans of pork & beans. Place your donations in the crates located near the church entrances. Patti Walker will deliver the items to the food pantries. Thanks for your continued support.

The First Word

is published monthly by
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9:00 am - Noon

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PHOTOS FROM GRANDPARENT/GRANDCHILD CAMP AT LAKE LUCERNE



In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.



LOOSE CHANGE OFFERING for July will support the Hospitality Center at St. Luke's Church.



From Hospitality Center:

"We provide Hospitality for All, including free breakfast and lunch to anyone in need, regardless of income level or background. In addition to food, we offer supportive services such as AA, mental

health support groups, monthly haircuts, connection to community resources, and community fellowship." Much support is greatly appreciated. Simple place your loose change – or more – in the envelopes found in the pew racks and indicate "mission project" on the envelope. Thank you for your continued support of our mission projects.



Please help- the men's side of our closet is bare!!! We have no men's shoes at all, and the only pants and shorts we have are size 40+. Shirts/ hoodies are needed, too. If you have any men's clothes looking for a new home, we would greatly appreciate them. THANK YOU!



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The Vision statement:

Inspire all to live faithfully in Jesus Christ

The Mission statement:

Gather, Equip, and Serve our community and the world in the name Jesus Christ!