

# TUSCOLA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONNECT

## OCTOBER 2023



### *A Note From The Pastor*

Grace and peace to the People of Tuscola,

Fall is now in full swing. The church is alive with the sound of Children's and youth programs, Music programs, and activities that reach the community. As these programs and activities continue, we should look for more ways to include anyone in everything we do. Christ calls us to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." Mark 16:15 NRSV. The Good News we get to share is God's wonderful love for us and All. I want to talk this month about our continued relationships with other Christians in the community and other Churches in the community of Tuscola.

In the United Methodist Church, we are called to be in communion or connection with other Churches and Christians within the communities we serve and are located. In the Book of Discipline, the United Methodist Church's governing document, we, as Methodists, are called to be in connection with other churches in paragraphs 207-211. This helps us understand how we are to work together with other churches in the community and that it will be done as an ecumenical resource-sharing program.

Here in Tuscola, a historical ecumenical group has shared resources and joined together in community services like the Thanksgiving Service, National Day of Prayer, and Baccalaureate Service and has been called TAMA or the Tuscola Area Ministerial Alliance. TAMA's main financial ministry has been working with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office on providing overnight lodging for transient persons passing through the community.

Last fall, Tuscola UMC was scheduled to host the Community Thanksgiving Service. On November 13, we hosted an informational conversation about LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Plus) persons. After hosting this event, some of the TAMA pastors voted to remove the Thanksgiving service from this Church, which is what happened. Since then, TAMA has been working on a Covenant Agreement and the Tuscola Area Ministerial Alliance Agreement (TAMA Agreement) around how the TAMA organization would run and their shared beliefs.

On July 1, 2023, I was appointed to Tuscola UMC and began to be part of the discussion on the TAMA Agreement. In August 2023, TAMA met several times to hone and perfect the Agreement. The Churches Represented at that time at the meeting

were Tuscola UMC, Tuscola First Christian Church, Tuscola Nazarene Church, Tuscola Lutheran, Tuscola UCC, Tuscola First Baptist, Eagle Mountain Assemblies of God. The Catholic Church Forty Martyrs, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints were not represented.

In the discussion of the TAMA Agreement, it was shared with me that the instigating factor of the agreement, which has never been done before this time, was the LGBTQIA+ conversation that Tuscola UMC hosted back in November of 2022. The TAMA Agreement lays out, like many organizations' by-laws, the Purpose, Membership, Leadership, Financial responsibilities, and Activities the organization will do and follow are all outlined. In the case of the TAMA Agreement, it also includes a section on Shared Beliefs. The TAMA Agreement specifies that for Membership to TAMA, the Senior Pastor must agree and Sign the TAMA Agreement.

With the Shared Belief section added and the need for the Senior Pastor, in TUMC's case, that would be me, to sign in agreement with the whole of the TAMA Agreement, this changes how our relationship with TAMA will have to work. I want to briefly explain why that is and what that means for the future.

First, signing the TAMA Agreement with any section of Shared Beliefs opens the Church and me up to incongruences with the United Methodist Doctrine. The Scripture that comes to mind is that "you cannot serve two masters, either you will hate the one and love the other..." Matthew 6:24. As a Clergy in the United Methodist Church, I am Called to know the Doctrines of the Church and, after fully examining them, profess to preach and maintain the Doctrines of the United Methodist Church; this is found in the Book of Discipline Paragraph 336. As Members of the Tuscola United Methodist Church, in your Membership Vows, you promise to be loyal to the United Methodist Church and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries; this is found on page 93 of the United Methodist Book of Worship. Therefore, signing the TAMA Agreement would make me and you all beholden to the Shared Beliefs in the TAMA Agreement, which, in my understanding, are not in alignment with the United Methodist Doctrine. Several Shared Beliefs are not in alignment with the United Methodist Doctrine, and I want to talk about two of them for a moment: the subsections of the Sanctity of Human Life and Marriage and Gender. If you would like to read all the Shared Beliefs, please get in touch with me, and I can share a copy with you and discuss them.

The subsection titled Sanctity of Human Life says, "Every person, from Conception to Natural Death, is created in the image and Likeness of God. As such, each person deserves protection and dignity as a fellow human being." This is a direct quote for the TAMA Agreement. This is an indirect way of saying that TAMA does not support Abortions of any kind or many, if not all, forms of End-of-life care or life-saving care. In the United Methodist Social Principles, a section of the Book of Discipline, Abortion when "the physical life of the mother is in danger .... or when there are severe fetal abnormalities that are incompatible with life" is to be considered and performed under the care of a licensed physician and in consultation and consent of the family, book of Discipline paragraph 161.J. the TAMA Agreement would remove this option and not permit me to counsel someone in that position. The Discussion of End-of-life Care or lifesaving care is wrapped up in the term Natural Death. With modern medicine, we help ourselves live longer and live after traumatic accidents or health issues that, left to our own devices, we would not normally live through. As United Methodists, we believe in caring for a person with all modern Medicine possible, as found in our social principles paragraph 161.V.

The second subsection I wanted to address is Marriage and Gender. There are many problems with this subsection, and this is not the correct forum to address them all, but let me speak in an overall sense for a minute. That language that is used is harmful, inaccurate, and seeks to exclude persons. In the United Methodist Church, even as we discuss this topic as a denomination and where we want to go, we still seek to include all persons and state that they are of sacred worth, from the Book of Discipline paragraph 161.F. We, as a church, must see that the language we use and what we say absolutely affects lives around us. We become part of the harm when we codify or support harmful, outdated language.

So, for these reasons and many more, I have decided not to sign the TAMA agreement. What does that mean for the Tuscola UMC, and how will we continue to work with TAMA? By not signing, I will never be able to be a voting member of TAMA, and the Tuscola UMC will not have a voting member. Tuscola UMC can never host a TAMA-organized community service, and I would never be able to preach at a TAMA-organized community service. We are still invited to attend any of the TAMA-organized events

and services. We are just not permitted to lead or host them. I am still invited to attend their monthly meetings, but I will not have a vote. We can still contribute to and send people to what they call the Transient Ministry. "We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons.

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all."

This is one of the missions of the United Methodist Church, found in paragraph 140 of the Book of Discipline. As your pastor, I will continue guiding us to do more of this. I feel if I had signed the TAMA agreement, I would have pushed us away from this mission when we should be running towards it. As long as I am the pastor of Tuscola UMC, I will not ever tell someone they are not welcome here; instead, I will tell everyone that this is a place where everyone is Loved, not just by God but by all of us as well. Please join in with me on this journey of inclusion rather than exclusion.

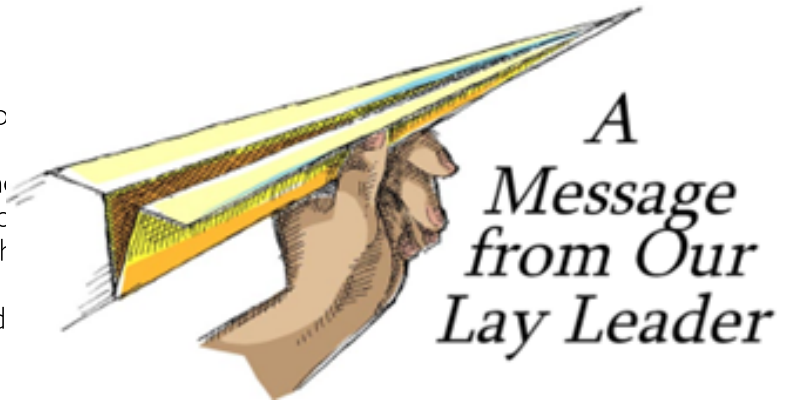
Blessings

Pastor Bennett A. Woods



Greetings fellow Christians!

Most of us pray for our families and loved ones. We may pray for strangers that we hear in church need prayer. Or maybe we even go so far as to pray for our country but how often do we pray for our church? What might we accomplish if we asked God what his will for TUMC is? One time a day or many just say something like, "God, help us to know your will for Tuscola UMC." For you old-timers, Ruth Slaughter used to call this type of prayer an arrow prayer because you shoot them right up to God whenever a need comes to your mind. Do we have the faith to keep asking and listening until God answers?



There was good news from the **SPRC** (Staff-Parish Relations Committee) meeting on September 12. Pastor Bennett expected 16 students for Kid's Club on September 13 and 10 students for Youth group that same night! The children and youth ministries are still being staffed by volunteers until a Children and Youth director can be hired. If you are interested in helping with either of these groups, please see Pastor Bennett or Mary Ann Pattenaude.

**TRUSTEES** voted to accept the bid by Roofs by Rodger to replace the church, parsonage and parsonage garage roofs. This will include new gutters also. The work is expected to start in October. Reimbursement by the insurance company will cover all the costs associated with this work. Pastor Bennett reported that Roofs by Rodger did excellent work in replacing the windows in the upstairs of the parsonage. Also in regards to the parsonage, Pastor Bennett requested the broken windows in the downstairs be fixed before winter and an unused furnace in the basement be removed. A Catholic church in Wisconsin is interested in purchasing our organ which has been in storage for many years. They will be responsible for all moving costs. Pastor Bennett contacted Ameren and we will be participating in a program to replace all the lights in the building except for the floodlights, with LED lights. Ameren will cover 90% of this cost so our outlay is only \$6000. The expected payback is in one year. This change will reduce our electric usage and reduce the need to replace light bulbs so often. A motion was passed to pay BluSky Restoration \$2500 for emergency work that was done in the parsonage when a water line broke over two years ago.

At their meeting on 9/18, the **FINANCE** committee learned that the financial reports have been fixed. A correction to the motion to approve the \$3000 reimbursement to Pastor Terri Haas was approved. The underpayment was for her pension not health insurance. Budget items were discussed in anticipation of the charge conference on October 29. The discussion must be continued so the next meeting of the committee will be held earlier than usual on October 9. Consecration Sunday will be on October 22.



Committee reports to the **CHURCH COUNCIL** follow except for the Finance and Trustee news which can be found in the previous paragraphs.

Mary Ann Pattenau, **SPRC** chair reported that the job application for Children and Youth director has been posted. The position is for 30 hours a week at a pay rate of \$20 / hour. She asked that we encourage anyone who might be a good applicant or someone thinking of applying to submit their application. The committee will be meeting monthly through December.

**United Women in Faith** president, Georgia Wilkinson, introduced the new president, Jan Mann, who was in attendance and will take over in January. Georgia reported that the UWF officers and budget have been approved.

Jerry Leonard reported that a breakfast meeting was held on September 28 for all men interested in being a part of **United Methodist Men**. Chili for Chaddock will be held on November 15.

The **SAM Pantry** board has been formed and they have had several meetings as reported by Jerry Leonard. They are still looking for someone to fill the coordinator position. This is a volunteer position requiring 15-20 hours per month. Some of the skills the coordinator position requires are grant writing, ordering food and supervising volunteers. In the interim, Margie Delheimer has been filling in. The USDA has a set number of food items it ships to each county and SAM is receiving food it does not want. Rules for those who qualify for assistance have changed and it was suggested these changes be communicated to members of the community and surrounding areas in Douglas county.

The **Christian Justice** committee sponsored a talk and discussion regarding the plight of indigenous peoples on 10/1. The presentation was given by Jenny Stuerke Bisonette, a social worker on an Ojibwe Indian reservation in Wisconsin. The committee will meet again on 10/23.

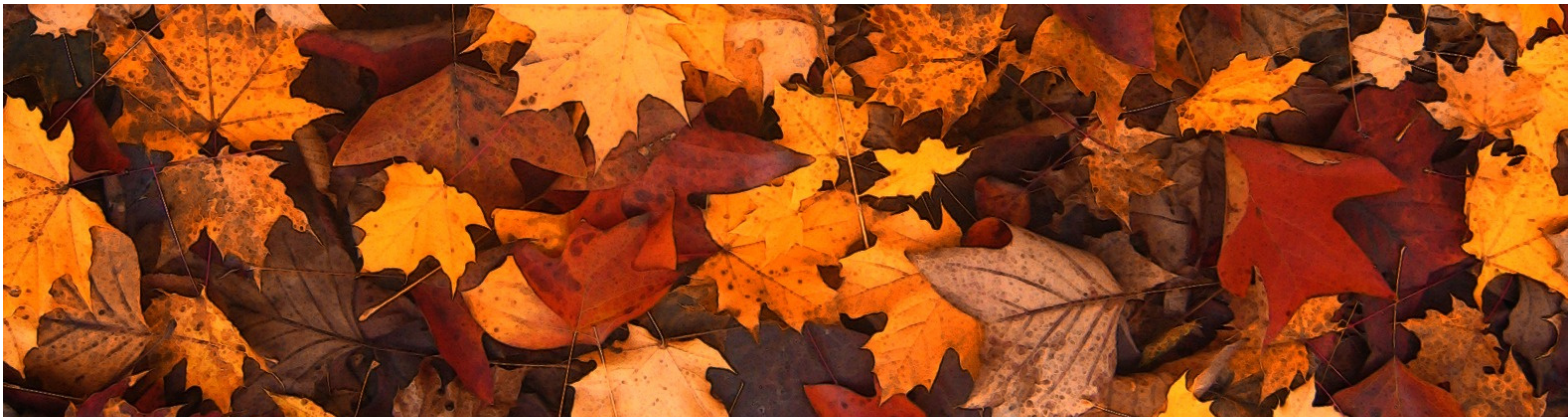
The **Worship** committee discussed plans for the remainder of the year and purchased a microphone for use during worship services.

The **Congregational Care** team is refining the list of homebound members. Pastor Bennett has been given credentials for OSF and Carle hospitals. He requests patients indicated they wish to have their pastor called when entering the hospital. Otherwise, he does not know a member is hospitalized unless he is specifically notified by the patient or their family.

The **Missions** committee is planning for their second Fall Festival on 10/7. There will be outside children's activities, vendors, and food trucks. United Women in Faith will have individual baked goods for sale at a cost of \$1.00 per item. The committee has decided that all UMC special Sundays will be observed during the coming year. The special offerings on those days will go to support UMCOR, Human Relations Day, Native American Ministries, Peace with Justice, World Communion, and United Methodist Students.

Pastor Bennett reported on the activities of Kid's club and youth groups. He is asking for volunteers to help with each group. He is also looking for volunteers to provide a light meal for the youth groups on Wednesdays. Tina Kestner has volunteered to help with Children's church and Kid's club each week to provide a stable presence for the children. For the time being, Pastor Bennett will provide the lessons for the children and lead the youth groups. Worship attendance is going up and he is hoping to engage more people in the life of the church.

If you have questions or comments, you may contact me, Karen Benner, at [kbbenner@gmail.com](mailto:kbbenner@gmail.com) or by phone at 217-721-7750.







# Health Checks

Join Parish Nurse, Chelsie Evans after service on the 4th Sunday of every month for a blood pressure and vitals check. She will also be going over how to use Narcan if anyone would like to learn how in the unfortunate event you would ever need to use it.

## Tuscola United Methodist Church

Thursday, October 19 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Fellowship Hall 901 N. Prairie St.

Masks optional. Appointments required.  
To schedule an appointment, scan QR code  
call ImpactLife at 800.747.5401  
or go to [bloodcenter.org/group, grp #71203](http://bloodcenter.org/group, grp #71203)



## August Attendance & Offerings

	Attendance	Offerings
Sept. 3	97	\$4,925
Sept. 10	85	\$4,30
Sept. 17	117	\$2,656
Sept. 24	71	\$2,673
<b>Digital Giving Total</b>		<b>\$3,951</b>

*(The offerings above are what is collected on Sunday in the plate and the electronic giving's)*

*We also offer electronic giving that is safe and easy from your checking or savings. Call the church office, 253-4232, to get started today!*

### October Worship at Brookstone

- Oct. 1 : Speaker — Mary Ann Dier-Zimmerman
- Oct. 8 : Speaker — Cindy Pringle
- Oct. 15 : Speaker — John Watson
- Oct. 22 : Speaker — TBD
- Oct. 29 : Speaker — Bruce Woods

*If you would like to help with this ministry, please contact John Watson at 217-369-6867 or email to: [jfw@craiglaw.net](mailto:jfw@craiglaw.net)*

# UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Columbus Day is a holiday in October, but for Indigenous People/First Nation/Native Americans/Indians it's a day of mourning. Columbus's "discovery" began over 500 years of slavery, stolen lands, wars, attempted annihilation, forced removal, boarding schools, and other atrocities against the existing tribes in North America. Recently, our United Women in Faith learned about the "Doctrine of Discovery-The Land is Not Empty" by author, Sarah Augustine. Written by leaders of the Catholic Papacy in 1493, this Doctrine gave permission to the explorers to settle on the land, take the resources, convert, remove or kill the inhabitants because they were ignorant savages incapable of self-government. They quoted bible verses for justification! Our Manifest Destiny was a continuation of this doctrine.

The REDress and Quilt Projects for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women draw attention to this decades long injustice. On Tuesday, Oct.24, WILL tv will show, "Bring Her Home", a film that follows three Indigenous women-an artist, an activist, and a politician-as they work to vindicate and honor their relatives who are victims in the growing epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Our Social Justice committee and UWF will present a program Sunday, Oct. 1st at 6:30 that will focus on the continued trauma Native Americans experience.

WILL, local PBS station, will feature several specials involving Native Americans in October. On Monday and Tuesday, Oct. 16, 17 at 7:00 P.M., "The American Buffalo" documentary will be aired. This film will include interviews with leading Native American scholars and experts, including Rosalyn LaPier, an Indigenous writer and University of Illinois history professor. She will also be featured in a conversation with host, Judy Woodruff, in a PBS News Hour special, "The American Buffalo: A Story of Resilience at 10:00P.M. on Tuesday, Oct. 10. LaPier and her Blackfeet tribe have a long relationship with bison on the northern Great Plains. She is an environmental historian, understands the history of the American West, and blends academic knowledge with traditional knowledge learned from elders.

The Indigenous people and bison have been interconnected for centuries, and the white man's indiscriminate hunting in the 1800s has had a devastating impact on their communities. Their culture was dependent upon the bison (food, clothing, shelter, fuel, and religion). Some tribes are now helping to reintroduce bison to their former homes. In 2023, Professor LaPier, is researching the landscape management practices of Indigenous women on the northern Great Plains

Providing historical context to "Little Bird", companion film, "Coming Home", will be shown on Friday, October 13 at 9:00P.M. The six part series on PBS will begin at 10:00 P.M., Sunday, Oct.22. The Canadian drama follows Bezhig (Little Bird) who searches for her birth family. At age 5, Little Bird had been removed from her home on Long Pine Reserve in Saskatchewan and adopted by a Montreal Jewish family. She is part of a generation of children forcibly apprehended (kidnapped) by the Canadian government through a policy later coined the Sixties Scoop. Our government also practiced this removal, as well as building over 500 boarding schools to rid the children of their culture. Beatings, food deprivation, exposure to weather, solitary confinement, and even death were common for the students.

UWF supports two missionary conferences that minister to Native Americans. One is in Oklahoma, and the other is in Alaska. Our brothers and sisters of many tribes still remember, and so should we. Learn more, never forget, plan an action, raise awareness.

"Saints from every tribe and language and people and nation sing a new song." Revelation 5:9

# TUSCOLA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



# FALL VENDOR & CRAFT FAIR

OCTOBER 7, 2023



**9:00AM - 3:00PM**  
**TUSCOLA UNITED METHODIST**  
**FELLOWSHIP HALL**



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BEING A VENDOR  
PLEASE CONTACT SARAH EVANS

Email: [sevans@tuscolaumc.com](mailto:sevans@tuscolaumc.com)



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KATHLEEN DYER  
CUSTODIAN

OCTOBER  
2023

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE

1 Coffee Hour 9:30 Worship 10am Jr. High Youth Group 5pm Sr. High Youth Group 5:45pm	2	3 TUWF Board 10am Bible Study 11am	4 SAM Pantry 7am Bible Study 11am Kids Club 3pm Choir/Handbells 6pm	5 TCHS Varsity Football Team Dinner 6:30pm	6	7 Fall Vendor & Craft Fair 9am
8 Coffee Hour 9:30 Worship 10am Jr. High Youth Group 5pm Sr. High Youth Group 5:45pm	9 All Staff Meeting 1pm Bible Study 1pm Finance 5pm	10 Bible Study 11am SPRC 6pm	11 SAM Pantry 7am Bible Study 11am Kids Club 2pm Choir/Handbells 6pm	12 MOPS 9am Trustees 5pm	13 TCHS Varsity Football Team Dinner 6:30pm	14
15 Coffee Hour 9:30 Worship 10am Jr. High Youth Group 5pm Sr. High Youth Group 5:45pm	16 Church Council 6pm	17 Bible Study 11am MOPS - Kids Day Out	18 SAM Pantry 7am Bible Study 11am Kids Club 3pm Choir/Handbells 6pm	19 Blood Drive 9am TCHS Varsity Football Team Dinner 6:30pm	20	21
22 CONSECRATION SUNDAY Coffee Hour 9:30 Worship 10am Jr. High Youth Group 5pm Sr. High Youth Group 5:45pm	23 Bible Study 1pm Christian Justice 1pm Rebekah Circle 7pm	24 Bible Study 11am Rachel Circle 1pm	25 SAM Pantry 7am Bible Study 11am Kids Club 3pm Choir/Handbells 6pm	26	27 TCHS Varsity Football Team Dinner 6:30pm	28
29 Coffee Hour 9:30 Worship 10am Jr. High Youth Group 5pm Sr. High Youth Group 5:45pm Charge Conference 4:30pm	30	31 Bible Study 11am				