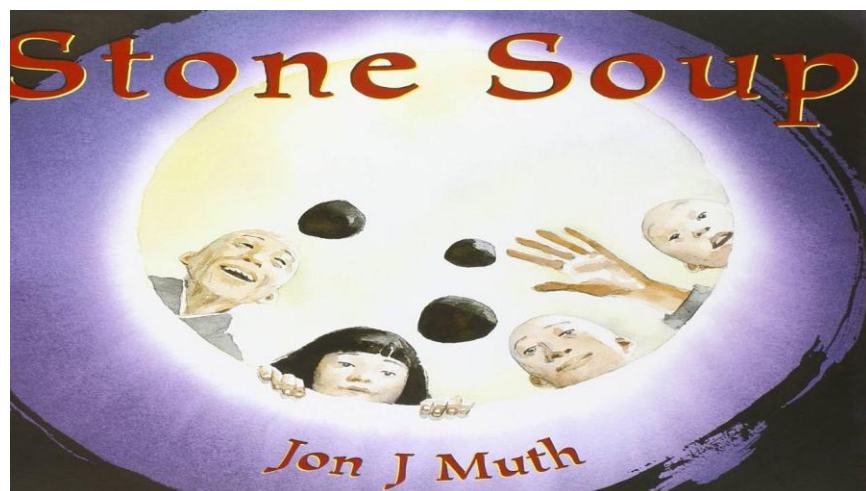


“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”

Presented by Rev Kristen Lowe on 02-04-18

At Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI

With credit to Jon J Muth



1Kings 17:7-16

After a while the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land. The LORD’s word came to Elijah: Get up and go to Zarephath near Sidon and stay there. I have ordered a widow there to take care of you. Elijah left and went to Zarephath. As he came to the town gate, he saw a widow collecting sticks. He called out to her, “Please get a little water for me in this cup so I can drink.” She went to get some water. He then said to her, “Please get me a piece of bread.” “As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any food; only a handful of flour in a jar and a bit of oil in a bottle. Look at me. I’m collecting two sticks so that I can make some food for myself and my son. We’ll eat the last of the food and then die.” Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go and do what you said. Only make a little loaf of bread for me first. Then bring it to me. You can make something for yourself and your son after that. This is what Israel’s God, the LORD, says: The jar of flour won’t decrease and the bottle of oil won’t run out until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.” The widow went and did what Elijah said. So the widow, Elijah, and the widow’s household ate for many days. The jar of flour didn’t decrease nor did the bottle of oil run out, just as the LORD spoke through Elijah.



Three monks traveled along a mountain road. They talked about cat whiskers, the color of the sun, and whatever else came to mind. “What makes one happy?” Asked the youngest monk. The old and the wisest monk said, “Let’s find out.” The monks found themselves gazing down at the rooftops of a village below. The monks knew the village had been through many hard times and villagers had even become suspicious of their neighbors. The villagers worked hard, but only for themselves. They had little to do with one another. When the monks came down, the villagers disappeared into their houses and no one came to the gate to greet them. Even the windows were closed

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”

tight. The monks knocked on the doors but there was no answer. “These people do not know happiness,” they all agreed. “But today we will show them how to make stone soup.”



They gathered twigs and made a fire. They placed a small tin pot on top and filled it with water. A brave little girl who had been watching came to them. “What are you doing?” She asked. “We are making stone soup and we need three round, smooth stones,” said a monk. The little girl helped the monks find three perfectly round stones. “These stones will make excellent soup,” said the oldest monk. “But this very small pot won’t make much.”



The little girl ran home to get her mother’s big pot. “The three strangers are making soup from stones,” she said. The mother, curious herself, told some neighbors that there was something exciting happening.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



The monks poked the coals. As smoke drifted up, the neighbors peered out from their windows. They found the monks, the fire, and the large pot in the middle of the village... very curious, indeed! One by one, the villagers came out to see just what this stone soup was. “Of course, old-style stone soup should be well seasoned with salt and pepper,” said the young monk. “But we have none.” “I have some salt and pepper!” Said a villager and disappeared and came back with spices. The old monk took a taste.



“The last time we had soup stones of this size and color, carrots made the broth very sweet.” “Carrots?” Said a woman from the back. “I may have a few carrots!” And she returned with as many carrots as she could carry and dropped them into the pot.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



“Do you think it would be better with onions?” Asked the other monk. “Oh, yes, maybe an onion would taste good,” said a farmer. He left and returned in a moment with five big onions. He dropped them into the bubbling soup. Something magical began to happen among the villagers. As each person opened his or her heart to give, the next person gave even more. The monks simply stirred and the pot bubbled. At last, the soup was ready.



The villagers gathered together. Everyone sat down to eat. They had not been together for a feast like this for as long as anyone could remember. After the banquet, they told stories, sang songs, and celebrated long into the night. They had come together to create something wonderful for everyone! When each person shared, the most amazing thing happened! This was truly something to celebrate! Then they unlocked their doors and took the monks into their homes and gave them very comfortable places to sleep.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



In the gentle spring morning that came the next day, everyone gathered together to say farewell. “Thank you for having us as your guests,” said the monks. “You have been most generous.” “Thank you,” said the villagers. “With the gifts you have given, we will always have plenty. You have shown us that sharing makes us all richer.” “And to think,” said the monks, “To be happy is as simple as making stone soup.”

I am proud of our denomination. I am proud to be a united Methodist. We are a connectional church – connecting with each other and around the world because we realize that together we can be stronger for the cause of Christ. Our church is one piece of that connectional puzzle. Each disciple who grows deeper in their faith creates a ripple effect into the world. I am proud of all we have accomplished and all the things we dream for our future. You are part of that future today!

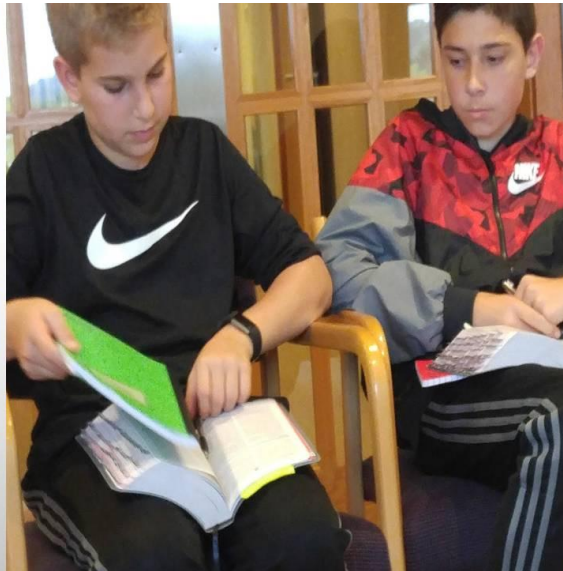


Over the past year, a group of our young people confirmed their faith in Jesus Christ. With the guidance of their teacher, Lisa Frost, their parents and mentors, they spent the two year process exploring their faith in the safety and love of their church family. Your generosity helped them to take hold of their faith so that the foundation is set for the rest of their lives.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



This year seven new young people start the two-year process all over again. One thing that has really propelled their acclimation together is that this group was part of a pilot program last year that took Sunday school to a new level. Both the kids and their parents bonded during this time. This is a program we are looking at implementing in the coming months as we explore how to best care for our young people. It's an exciting time to support crossroads ministries.



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United Methodists at the very core of the denomination are missional. We are a social justice entity, always seeking to be god’s hands and feet in the world. Last year we had an opportunity once again to help with food4kids and help provide flood buckets to umcor during the flooding down south. We are fortunate to have the ability to address the needs of our community and the world. There are many other ways we’ve been able to roll up our sleeves such as providing dinners for porchlight on a regular basis.

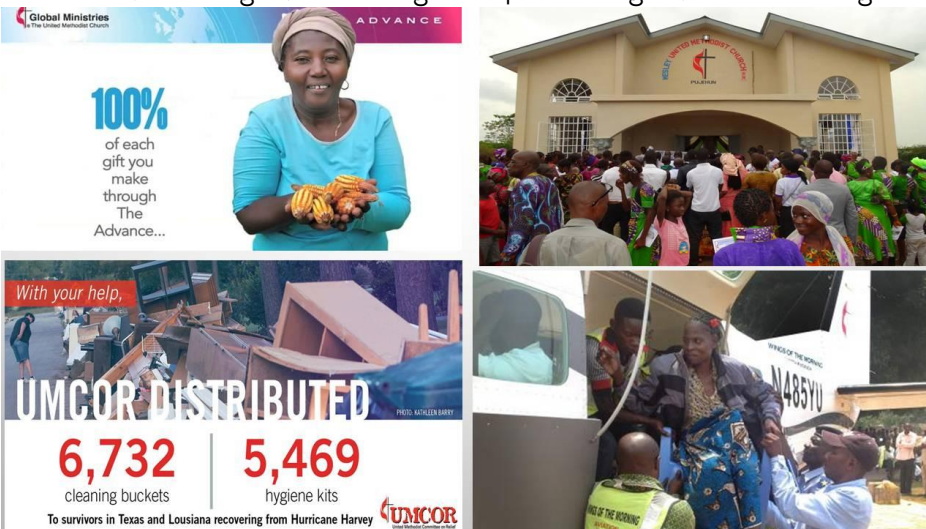


In the past year we’ve become more visible in the community, and plan to continue our presence outside our walls. We were able to invite several community participants to attend financial peace university and provide scholarship monies through your generous giving and through a grant from the United Methodist Foundation. We worked on bringing people to Christ through building relationships as a first step. We had a very large turnout at our mallard’s game, where our wonderful faithful men sang. We also enjoyed caroling around the Waunakee area and personally inviting people to crossroads for Christmas Eve. We worked with the Waunakee neighborhood connection, offering our building and manpower. The weekend of service raked in 10k for the WNC. And, this summer, one of our young people sat on a panel and worked as a page for the Wisconsin conference. This proved to be valuable training as Rebecca Swenson advises the ministry strategy team through a young person’s eyes.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”

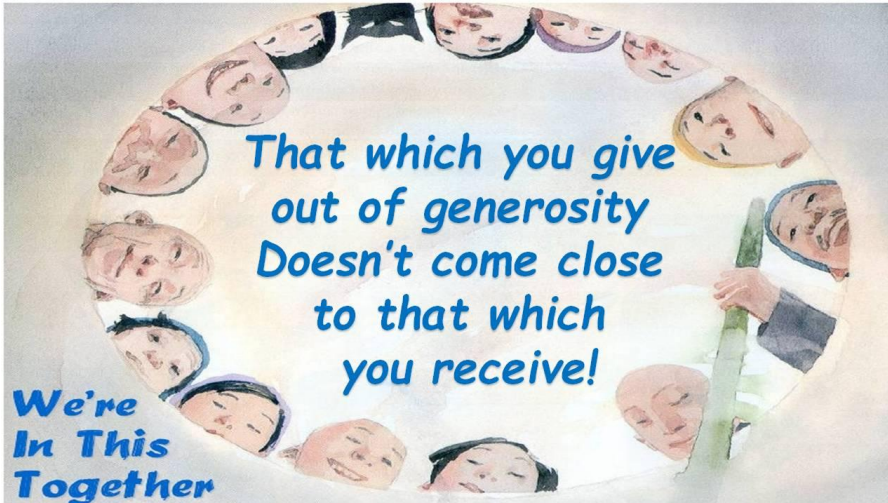


Our music has touched so many hearts. We are fortunate to have wonderful voices and wonderful talent – people passionate about sharing their gifts to the glory of god. We’ve also been able to provide amazing growth groups as a way to ignite our hearts and transform our lives. This year we’ll be offering several groups once again. Groups can be fun, meaningful, interesting and spiritual. Again, it’s an exciting time to be part of crossroads.



As a united Methodist church in a connectional system, we can do bigger things together. We can provide much needed help in our community and throughout the world. A dollar here can save a life there. Imagine the shouts of the popular chorus, “He has made me glad. He has made me glad. I will rejoice for he has made me glad...,” thundering through huge speakers during the unveiling of the new Wesley united Methodist church in southern Sierra Leone. It is the first united Methodist church to be built in the Muslim-dominated Pujehun district. What you’re seeing on the bottom right is wings of the morning our united Methodist aviation ministry. Our missionary is Gaston ntambo. He focuses his area mainly in the Congo where so many people struggle when they are in need of healthcare. I’ve met Gaston. His story is incredible. He says sometimes families walk for days to bring sick loved ones to the place where the plane will land. Even so, there were only a few people who could fit on the plane to go to the hospital. People died hoping to have one more space for them. Within the last few years, our combined giving allowed Gaston to get a bigger plane. Now when he makes his stops, he can take many people with him. Lives have been saved thanks to your generosity.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



As you bring your pledge cards forward this morning in praise and thanksgiving for all god has done and all god plans to do through us at crossroads, consider the dreams for our future – for those here and those whom we have yet to meet. Consider how you're giving impacts those sitting around you – especially the children – and impacts a child you don't know on the other side of the world. Together, we make a difference.



As you come forward this morning, bring your pledge card, this morning's offering, your connection card... take a key fob with you to remind you of this day. Let it remind you of the contentment you receive when you act with a genuine and generous heart. This is something you can keep with you.

“Stone Soup”, Week 5 of “Enough Series”



On the back is a prayer. Would you please pray with me? Lord, help me to be grateful for what i have, to remember i don't need most of what i want, and that joy is found in simplicity and generosity. Amen.



Dear friends, we are crossroads! All are welcome, loved, cared for and supported. We live our faith by connecting the disconnected, igniting hearts for Jesus Christ and transforming lives to transform the world. Amen!