

The Connection

Ridge United Methodist Church

Volume 7, Issue 2

February 2015

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Worship with us
Sunday mornings
at 8:30, 9:45, or
11:00

A Visible Sign That We Care

For the last several years, a group of people has explored the idea of erecting a columbarium on Ridge Church property. This group presented a plan to the Operations Team late last year—the result of much research and hard work. With a policy in place, the Operations Team is now getting everything ready to break ground on the columbarium this spring.

A columbarium is a place for the respectful storage of burial urns (which hold a deceased's cremated remains). The word comes from the Latin *columba* (dove) and originally referred to compartmentalized housing for doves and pigeons. The Romans typically built their columbaria partially or completely underground. If you have ever been to Rome, you have probably seen them. I had the chance to visit some amazing columbaria when I was in Israel. Today, columbaria are often free standing units, or part of another structure.

More and more churches are constructing columbaria on their properties as a way to honor the deceased in their communities. Ridge Church's columbarium will be attached to the south exterior wall of the Sanctuary. It will consist of 56 niches that can each hold two urns. The area surrounding the columbarium will be landscaped to provide a serene and private environment where people may go to pay their respects.

Why are we doing this?

If you go to "goodsearch" and type in "What my church means to me," you will find articles of people sharing about their churches. "Church becomes our extended family." "We look forward to participating in worship and sharing our lives with friends." "Our children learn how to interact with other children at church and develop friendships." "Our children can also learn about sacredness, respect and a sense of duty."

I met my Nancy at church, and I'm sure many of you have done the same. We all have many friends at church, and get together outside of church meetings, sharing family time together. Our church is a safe place. We can meet and share our thoughts, our needs, and short comings. We can inspire each other and challenge each other. We can share goals and become accountable to each other to help reach our goals or work through an issue.

Church is a place to be connected. A place we can feel a part of something bigger than ourselves. A place we can get involved in and help others—locally, nationally, or globally. It gives us opportunities to make a difference in other people's lives and impact our communities.

Personally, I think the answer to why Ridge Church should have a columbarium is an easy one. It just makes sense. We are baptized at our church, married at our church, active in our church our entire
(continued on page 6)

Menus for WWE in February

🕒 February 4:
Pizza

🕒 February 11:
Baked Pork Chops

🕒 February 18:
Ash Wednesday (No
WWE)

🕒 February 25:
Tacos

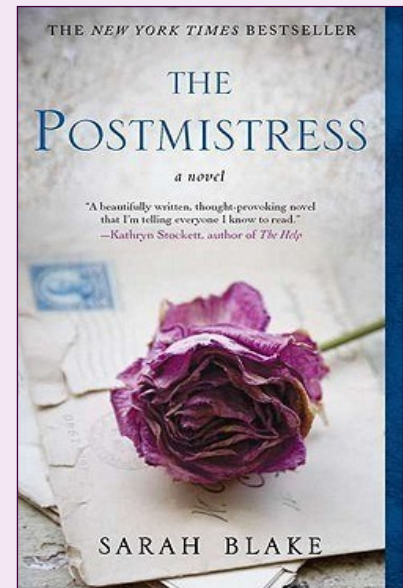
Special WWE programs beginning February 25th

Pastor Steve will lead a four-week WWE series on "Living and Dying: Ethical Dilemmas" beginning February 25th. Some of the topics will include: "Prolong Life or Prolong Dying," Trusts and Wills, "Living Wills or Advanced Health Care Directive," and information on funeral planning and cremation, an alternative to burial. This will also be a time to learn more about our columbarium—a repository for ashes.

Join us for a meal beginning at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall, followed by our program from 6:45 to 8 p.m.

RIDGE BOOK GROUP: *The Postmistress* Monday, February 2nd @ 7 p.m.

It's 1940, and the war in Europe is just beginning when the lives of three women—two in Franklin, Massachusetts and one in London—intersect through tragedy and coincidence. *The Postmistress* is a tale of two worlds—one shattered by violence, the other willfully naïve to the threat of Germany. Through the eyes of everyday people caught in history's tide, it examines how stories are told, and how the fact of war is borne even through everyday life.



You can join the discussion of this novel by first-time author Sarah Blake on February 2nd in the parlor. If you can't make this month's discussion, the next book, which is available from the Munster Public Library, is *Secrets Over Sweet Tea*, and will be discussed on Monday, March 9th.

*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can, to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can. —John Wesley*



LENT BEGINS ON FEBRUARY 18TH SERVICE AT 7 P.M.

We will hold a special Ash Wednesday service to help us begin our Lenten journey.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent, a time when many Christians prepare for Easter by observing a period of fasting, repentance, moderation and spiritual discipline. It emphasizes two themes: our sinfulness before God, and our human mortality. The service focuses on both themes, helping us realize that both have been triumphed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

During our service, the pastors will lightly rub the sign of the cross with ashes onto the foreheads of worshippers. Historically, ashes signified purification and sorrow for sins. The ashes we use come from the palm branches used at a Palm Sunday service—a reminder of the circle of life that we are all part of.

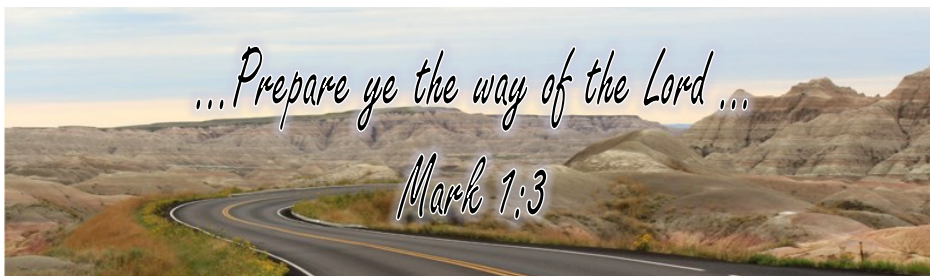
—Adapted from The United Methodist Book of Worship

Primetime Thursday Potluck & Movie February 26th @ noon



Join the Primetime group for an afternoon of food and fellowship. Bring your favorite dish and get ready for an enjoyable afternoon. Following our meal, we will watch the movie *The Ultimate Gift*, starring James Garner, Brian Dennehy and Abigail Breslin.

Please sign up on the Primetime bulletin board near the coat area across from Pastor Sheri's office.



Coming soon to Ridge Church: STEPHEN MINISTRIES

Several weeks ago our congregation decided to enroll in the Stephen Series system of lay caring ministry, developed by Stephen Ministries, a not-for-profit religious and educational organization based in St. Louis, Missouri. We will be developing a lasting program of caring ministry through the Stephen Series. This model of ministry is already working in thousands of congregations throughout North America and is equipping laypeople to minister to others who are in need.

From February 1st through February 7th, Lisa Percak and Kathy O'Brien will be attending a one-week Stephen Series Leader's Training Course in Anaheim, California. At this training course, they will receive the instruction and materials necessary to implement and sustain this program of lay caring ministry here at Ridge Church.

Following the Leader's Training Course, laypeople from Ridge Church will be invited to undertake 50 hours of training in Christian caring skills under the guidance of Pastor Sheri, who is a trained Stephen Minister, Lisa and Kathy. This training will prepare lay people to care for others, covering such areas as how to listen effectively, how to deal with

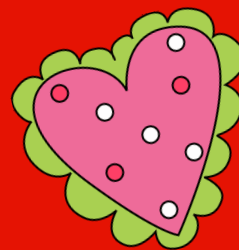
feelings, how to use traditional Christian resources in caring, how to maintain confidentiality, and how to deal with people experiencing crises. A Christ-centered approach to caring and the need to care for the whole person will be stressed throughout the training.

Upon completion of the Stephen Series training, these lay caregivers will be commissioned as "Stephen Ministers," and will become an important part of the caring ministry here at Ridge Church. These Stephen Ministers will provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care for people experiencing challenges in their lives—such as hospitalization, loss of a loved one, loneliness, divorce, unemployment, birth of a child, and many other life events for which a person could benefit from effective caring ministry.

This will be an exciting time for Ridge Church. The Stephen Series both multiplies the amount of caring ministry that goes on in our congregation and deepens the level of participation by laypeople in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

If you have questions about this new form of ministry our congregation is undertaking, please feel free to ask Kathy or Pastor Sheri. In the meantime, please keep Lisa, Kathy and our congregation in your thoughts and prayers as we prepare for this major step

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*Happy
Valentine's
Day!*

Operations Team (Finance & Trustees) from the January 13th meeting:

- Treasurer Linda Boender provided Profit & Loss reports for and January through December, 2014:

2014 Operating Income:
\$474,635

2014 Operating Expenses:
\$460,842

2014 Net Income:
\$13,793

December Building Fund Income:
\$4,212

Building Fund Expense:
\$5,673 (monthly mortgage payment)

Balance in the Building Fund: **\$113,712***

**The building fund balance reflects the proceeds from the sale of the parsonage*

- There was a question about a line in the finance report titled "Emerging Ministries," with an expense of \$2,959. It was explained that the expense is related to the costs associated with forming a new Stephen Ministry (see page 4).
- New energy-efficient LED fixtures were installed in the parking lot, which is now brightly illuminated at night. Dave Miller reported that according to meter readings taken before and after the LEDs were installed, the energy usage was reduced by one half.
- A 56-niche columbarium will be installed at Ridge Church

in 2015. The Operations Team approved offering niches at a pre-sale price of \$1,600 (each niche holds two cremain urns) during Lent. This will be advertised in various ways during February, with a display and applications available starting Sunday, February 22nd. Interested parties may request a packet that includes a Columbarium Policy and Application Forms. Members of the Columbarium Committee, who will oversee the construction, landscaping, and maintenance, are Jeanine Svoboda, Wayne Cable, Rick Schumacher, Adam Tenbarger and the Senior Pastor.

- A Pledge Campaign update: as of January 13th, \$308,898 was pledged to the General Fund, and \$29,355 to the Building Fund. By comparison, in 2014 \$365,228 was pledged to the General Fund, and \$14,840 to the Building Fund.
- A first draft of the 2015 budget was reviewed. Due to concerns about the low pledge amount, the budget was not approved, and will be reviewed again in February.

Missions Team, from the January 20th meeting:

- A total of **\$4,332** was collected during Advent: \$715 for Missions (undesignated); \$50 for Children of Abraham; \$1,255 for Pastor's Discretionary; \$290 for Ebola Response; \$370 for National Mission

Trip; and \$1,652 for Soup Kitchen.

- The team discussed the ebola crisis, which is finally subsiding in Africa. While the disease is abating, the need for food, sanitation, and aid is still dire. So, the team chose to make a \$2,000 donation to Kokeh Kotee, who is responding to dire needs in the Monrovia, Liberia area, and a \$2,000 donation to the *Hunger in West Africa* program through Operation Classroom in Sierra Leone.
- Sue Cook provided an update on the Haiti trip (see page 7).
- The Lenten Offering envelopes will have the same mission projects as Advent, minus the National Mission trip (which has not been scheduled).
- The team will sponsor a "Service Fair" on Sunday, September 13th to highlight all active ministry and service groups of Ridge Church. Invitations and information will be sent to representatives of these groups soon.
- Russ Snyder conducted the holiday light recycling program during the holidays, and made several trips to a recycling firm in Hammond. The total raised from the lights and extension cords was about \$14. The Missions Team thanks all who brought their old string of holiday lights and/or extension cords for recycling. However, the team is



30 HOUR FAMINE

On Friday, February 20th, Ridge Youth will begin a 30-hour fast to better understand the experience of those less fortunate around the world who do not have enough to eat.



They will also be raising money for World Vision, the 30 Hour Famine sponsor. Since Ridge Youth began participating in this fundraiser, they have helped raise nearly \$4,000 to fight world hunger. Help our youth continue the fight!

COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES

Just because some of our youth have moved on to college doesn't mean we have forgotten about them!

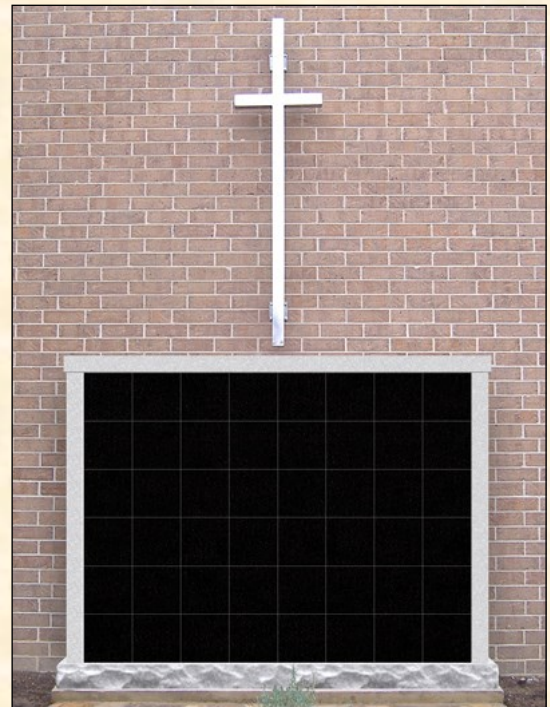


On Sunday, February 22nd, the youth group and the Martha Circle will be putting together care packages—full of homemade cookies and school items—to send to our college students. Your donations of small items such as pens, notebooks, pencils, post-it notes, bookmarks, etc. will be appreciated. Our college students love receiving these packages from their church family!

(Continued from page 1)

adult lives, raise our children in our church—why would we want to be remembered in a cemetery? Why would we not want to be remembered among the living at our church that means so much to us? Why would we not want to still be a part of the spirit of our church? Our family, which we leave behind, will still be at the church. Therefore, having a columbarium at the church will make it easier for them to “visit” and to keep the memory of us alive.

Having a columbarium is a visible sign that the church cares for their members from birth and baptism to death and eternal life. A columbarium is a way for the church to offer a practical and comfortable way for its members to make pre-death plans, relieving the surviving family of the difficult decisions at the time their loved one passes. There are so many things that have to be done when an individual dies that it's important to make pre-death plans now, and not put that burden onto your family or friends.



It just makes sense!

Ridge Church received a generous “seed” gift to get this project off the ground. We only need a few families to buy a niche in the columbarium to make it a reality. Starting on Sunday, February 22nd, we will begin our “pre-sale” of niches. We will be running a discounted price through Easter. During Lent, our WWE program will focus on issues of death and dying, and we will be available to answer any questions you might have about the columbarium.

Feel free to contact any of the Columbarium Committee members: Pastor Steve Conger, Wayne Cable, Rick Schumacher, Jeanine Svoboda and Adam Tenbarge.

Education News

Did you know that Ridge Church does not have an **Education Committee**? With many great teachers and education leaders, our church would benefit from a group to guide our teaching ministry team. Would you like to share in shaping the spiritual education of Ridge Church? We are currently organizing a committee and would love to have YOU involved! Our first meeting will be on **February 22**, please see me for more information.

To help our readers become familiar with the Christian Education opportunities available through our church, each month we feature a Bible Study/Christian Education group. This month we focus on the **Wonderful Wednesday Evening Classes (WWE)**, led by **Pastor Steve** and **Pastor Sheri**.

In December, we completed *Revival* by Adam Hamilton. This study gave us the opportunity to learn more about Methodism's founder- John Wesley. We learned of his life-changing transformation and how WE can bring about a spiritual revival transforming ourselves! In January, Pastor Steve began a study on the *Letters of Paul*, which will continue through February 11. And, February 25 will begin our *Lenten Study*. Stay tuned for more exciting study topics ...

The WWE classes begin at 6:45 p.m., immediately following the WWE meal, which begins at 6 p.m. Each Wednesday evening we share food, fun, and fellowship. After the meal, we gather for the study. It's a wonderful opportunity to learn, share, and grow in Christ.

Thanks to all our teachers and education leaders who share their gifts and talents to give us opportunities to grow in our faith and closer to God.

Do you have a passion for teaching? **We invite you to share your gifts and talents!** Feeling a gentle nudge on your spirit? Answer the call! If you would like to be involved in Ridge Church's teaching ministry, contact me at: sheri@ridgeumc.org, by phone 838-4770, or cell 718-4039.

In servanthood, pastor sheri

Ridge Church Sends Three to Haiti

From January 31st to February 7th, Sue Cook, Rick Spindler and Scott Sutter will help replace worn tent "homes" with more sturdy wood and siding structures.



They will work through Servants in Fellowship. Please keep them in your prayers.

The Ridge United Methodist Women financially supported a number of organizations in 2014. Below is a summary of their giving.

Outreach, (includes The Salvation Army, Hospice, Meal on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, and others) **\$1,875**

District, (includes pledge to missions, Lucille Raines Residence, and the World Thank Offering) **\$1,894**

Other, (includes Church Women United and postage required to send the College Care Packages) **\$178**

Total giving: **\$3,948**

The UMW also handles the Soup Kitchen finances. The Soup Kitchen began 2014 with a balance of \$1,941, and received \$2,450 in donations. A total of \$4,103 was spent to feed one meal each week to the homeless at City Rescue Mission in Hammond.

Another way to think of this: the Soup Kitchen program faithfully feeds between 35 and 50 people each week, **spending on average just \$79.**

February... What's one of the first things that comes to mind during the month of February? LOVE! And why shouldn't it? Valentine's Day is celebrated this month, conjuring images of cupids and red hearts, roses and chocolates.

In my mind, it also brings to the forefront thoughts about God's love. Both the Old and the New Testaments say a lot about love... God's love for us, our love for God. And our love for each other. In the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—Jesus named love for God and love for each other as the two greatest commandments, quoting from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The topic of love is woven throughout the Gospel of John.

We read in 1 John 4:7-12 that "...*God is love...*" Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13 about love, dedicating this short chapter to the topic. Verses 13:4-7: "*Love is...*" Paul isn't prescribing how we're supposed to act; instead he's describing how we naturally behave when we have love. I encourage you to read these passages.

It's easy to buy our loved one flowers or chocolates, or give another token of affection to show our love... but that doesn't work with God. We can't "buy" something to show God our love. We are incredibly blessed because each of us is already loved and cherished by God. So, how can we show God our love? Simple: gracing each other with genuine love.

Happy Valentine's Day! ~pastor sheri



COMING SOON: Stock sale

The annual Youth Stock Sale will be going on during the month of March! Youth will be selling "stocks" to their "investors" (you) to raise funds for the High School Mission Trip this summer. The plans are to once again work with Epworth Project in Slidell, Louisiana the week of July 19th to July 26th. Please plan now to invest in your youth!

Save these dates!



SPRING LUNCHEON

Thursday
APRIL 9th
11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.
Watch for more
information soon!



RUMMAGE SALE FOR MISSIONS

Saturday
APRIL 25th
Set aside your used
items as you do
Spring cleaning!

Ridge Church's Diamond Anniversary 1955-2015



This year, Ridge Church celebrates 60 years of faithful witness and serving our community and world. We are planning two events to commemorate this milestone that you won't want to miss, so mark your calendars now! On **Sunday, September 13th**, we will have one worship service at 10 a.m. to remember those 29 faith-filled people who were received into the membership of Ridge Methodist Church in 1955 by District Superintendent Dr. Allen B. Rice. After the service, we will have food and fellowship.

Our celebration will conclude on **Sunday, November 22nd** as we remember the laying of the cornerstone of our original structure. We will have one worship service on this special Sunday at 10 a.m., with a luncheon offsite at a location to be determined. More details will be announced as fall approaches.

If you would like to work with the committee planning these events, contact Kathy O'Brien.

Coming to Ridge Church Wednesday, March 25th: 'When God Left the Building'



Did you know that about 4,000 churches in the U.S. close every year? It's creating unprecedented social upheaval, which is the focus of "When God Left the Building."

You won't want to miss this special film that follows a church where attendance has dropped from 900 to 40. This church is disintegrating from the inside out, and faces a takeover from angry ex-members. The stories of other dying churches, as well as innovative forms of "church" that are thriving, are woven throughout the movie.

Plan now to attend!

Dear Ridge Church,
Thank you for the beautiful flowers that you sent and the support given during the difficult time following my mother's death.

Stayce Christ



We deeply appreciate your thoughtful expression of sympathy, which was of the greatest comfort to us in our sorrow. For the meals, the friendship and everything else, thank you.

Tammy, Nick & Tony Redman



Dear Good People of Ridge Church,
Nordikids & Nordifolk would like you to know how very much we appreciate your kindness & generosity on allowing us to have our meetings on Monday evenings at your church.

Dear Ridge Church Family,

We would like to thank you for the care and concern after the auto accident. It was such a comfort to us, knowing you were praying for our healing. We are progressing in our recovery.

Thank you so much for all the cards and most especially the prayers. We feel so blessed to have you all in our lives.

Sherry and Richard Seef

Dear Sue Cook and members of Ridge United Methodist,

Thank you so much for your help ringing bells this Christmas season! With your efforts, we were able to raise \$443.26. You are a wonderful blessing in our effort to serve this community in God's name.

God bless you all!

Emily Martinez, The Salvation Army

Dear Community Partner,

Thank you for giving your time this past Christmas to help The Salvation Army's Angel Tree Toy Program. Thanks to your commitment and efforts, we were able to serve over 1,200 children with gifts for Christmas. Had you not been willing to serve with us, we would not have been able to make as great of an impact in our community.

Please accept our sincere appreciation and deepest gratitude for your help this season. We truly appreciate all that you did and all the love and compassion you shared with the families we served.

Blessings upon you in the New Year,

Lieutenant Betsy Clark

Hammond/Munster Corps Officer

Dear Holly,

We at Hospice of the Calumet Area are grateful to Ridge United Methodist Church for hosting our Memorial Service. We heard from many who attended that it was a meaningful occasion for them. Dorothy and I appreciate the attention you gave to shepherding the arrangements from start to finish.

We also want to thank Dave Miller for setting up chairs and tables just as we wished, and for helping us with issues that came up as we were completing our preparations. Finally, we are grateful to Rev. Conger for his thoughtful welcome to the bereaved families and friends.

Sincerely,

Michael Pennanen, Spiritual Counselor, Hospice of the Calumet Area.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Nick Andre | 17 Mackenzie Cox |
| Marilynn Thompson | Heather Phipps |
| 4 Pat O'Brien | Hank Ray |
| 5 T.J. Zatorski | 18 Elsie Lammering |
| 6 Nora Hay | Helga Meyer |
| Elijah Matthews | 19 LaVern Grasty |
| Carrie Messmer | 20 Riese Drummond |
| Jennifer Olejniczak | Lois Parbst |
| 7 Ron Brandner | Claire Svoboda |
| George Cook | 21 Dick Jones |
| Beth Kitchell | 22 Annette Bruce |
| 8 John Goralczyk | 23 John Zafran |
| Lucas Groszewski | 24 Brad Anderson |
| Beth Harwood | 25 Kassia Groszewski |
| 9 Brittany Bruce | 26 Thomas Smith |
| 11 Joy Chnupa | 27 Lexi Martinez |
| Richard Seef | 28 Buddy Scardine |
| 12 R. J. Groszewski | Marie Cost |
| 15 Dave Holloway | Ian Svoboda |
| Ellen Nickoloff | 29 Brad Caddick |
| 16 Jacque Goins | Cheryl Roach |

USHERS

8:30

Cheryl Sorrels
Mandy Barbee
Ray Howe

11:00

Larry Washington
Bernice Nance
Kris Schumacher
Rick Schumacher

GREETERS

8:30

2/1 Youth
2/8 Louise Howe & Marlyce Luyster
2/15 Louise Howe & Marlyce Luyster
2/22 Louise Howe & Marlyce Luyster

11:00

2/1 Youth
2/8 Phyllis Washington & Dorothy Seefurth
2/15 Rich & Shirley Matthews
2/22 Pat Wiman & Dorothy Seefurth

LITURGISTS

8:30

2/1 Kevin Mybeck
2/8 Dick Jones
2/15 Tanya Jones
2/22 Chuck Lair

11:00

2/1 Youth
2/8 Diana Rogers
2/15
2/22

HOSPITALITY

8:30 & 11:00

Lydia Circle

9:45

2/1 Dayanna Frey & Lorena Alvarado
2/8 Jennifer Hill
2/15 Charlene & Tracey Wilson
2/22 Danny & Lisa Percak

All in the Family

PASSING

Monte Fowdy
January 12th



Congratulations to Betty Lukoshus, who was recently notified that she will be inducted in April into the Indiana High School Swimming & Diving Hall of Fame as a former girls swim coach at Munster High School!



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Methodist Church

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Do you have news to
share? The deadline
for **The Connection**
is February 16th.



Join us on these Fry-Days during Lent!

February 20th

March 6th

March 20th

Come enjoy the best fish fry in town! From 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., our servers will fill your plate with fried perch, macaroni & cheese, green beans, coleslaw, and baked potatoes. Desserts are on the side!

Donation: \$10 for adults, \$4 for children ages 4 to 10

All proceeds benefit the Ridge UMC general fund.

Volunteers are also needed to serve, clear tables, wash dishes, and cook.
Please sign up on the bulletin boards.