

FIRST NEWS AND NOTES

A Newsletter of The First United Methodist Church in Hagerstown

December 2021 & January 2022

Words From Our Minister: Pastor Nate Eckert

Have you ever wondered what Advent is all about? What exactly does it have to do with Christmas? Advent is all about the anticipation and the preparation of those who are willing to kneel at the manger of our Savior. Advent is the 4 weeks before the Eve of Jesus' birth when we take time to prepare by examining the dark places of our lives for signs of hope. Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas. And by Christmas, I don't mean Jesus's birthday celebration, but rather that crucial step we are encouraged to take every year when we kneel at the manger and offer our heart to God.

My family has a little nickname for me around this time of year. They like to call me "Ebenezer" in reference to Mr. Scrooge from A Christmas Carol. But I don't really mind the name, I kind of like it actually. Scrooge is an ideal character to look at when it comes to seeing how our anticipation and preparation during Advent should transform us.

I love to watch the transformation of that bitter, grumpy, "bah-humbug" of Scrooge! That moment when Scrooge wakes up and realizes he still has a chance to open his heart to the Cratchit family is something very special to see. My favorite moment is when Fred Cratchit is holding Tiny Tim on his shoulders and Tiny Tim declares those ever-familiar words, "God bless us, every one." That scene really helps us see what it takes to come to the place in our hearts where we would kneel at the manger of our Savior in surrender.

Pope John Paul II in his address on Dec. 18, 2002, said, "The liturgy of Advent...helps us to understand fully the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, it is necessary to understand that the whole of our life must be an 'advent,' a vigilant awaiting of the final coming of Christ. To predispose our mind to welcome the Lord who, as we say in the Creed, one day will come to judge the living and the dead, we must learn to recognize him as present in the events of daily life. Therefore, Advent is, so to speak, an intense training that directs us decisively toward him who already came, who will come, and who comes continuously."

Scrooge's encounters throughout the classic story helped him to recognize his need to surrender and kneel at the manger. Each and every day, through the dark times and the good times, we can see that Jesus is present in the events of our daily lives. The season of Advent ought to be a season of transformation in us. It ought to be a time, like Scrooge, where we make ourselves aware, or better yet, God reveals to us the things in our lives that do not point people to Christ. Scrooge discovered hope through his encounters and he embraced that hope and shared it with others. Advent ought to be a time where we rediscover the hope we have because of Jesus as we "swing portals of our hearts" wide open to those we impact each day.

As Scrooge said in the Christmas classic, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." Let us do the same.

A CHRISTMAS WISH

It all starts and ends with Jesus, the reason we celebrate the Christmas season. The humble birth of the long-awaited Messiah in a rustic stable, was announced by an angel. "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord." Like the lowly shepherds who were amazed by the angel's good news, we also come to worship our Lord at Christmas. This baby Jesus was to become a light and hope for the world teaching us how to love God and each other.

I am looking forward to the Christmas season with its special music, the food, the decorations and celebratory gatherings with family and friends. A Christmas wish is for time together with family to share old memories and create new ones. I have wonderful memories of childhood holidays with a large extended family of cousins, aunts, and uncles. As time passed, my siblings married and there was a new batch of babies and young children. I became the single aunt loving them all. Now I am a great-aunt with a new evolving generation to enjoy and love this Christmas season.

I wish and pray that we will all share the Advent themes of Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love as we celebrate the birth of the Christ child when God sent his son Jesus to live among us. Hallelujah! Merry Christmas!

**Pip, the Church Mouse also known as
Paula Guth**

Tis the season, I am listening to Christmas music and writing a Christmas Pip with a cup of coffee and comfy warm clothes while the temperature drops outside.

Merry Christmas!



Daily Devotion Booklets
Upper Rooms & Daily Bread on Bookrack
in Friendship Haven Café Donation: \$1.00



UMW President Mindy Smith Shares to UMW Members and the Congregation.

Church family for this newsletter I have some Old Business and some New Business to share with you all.

Remember back in early October when I gave you ladies a big list of items and a short week to shop for items for an event at the Raines Residence. We received a thank you letting us know how much the residents appreciated our help in stocking their Country Store. A quote from Marian, one of the recipients, "You really don't know how much this means to our residents. We really appreciate all the help with our finances that this helps with!" and Tracey said, "I love to shop at the Country Store, but most of all I love the love you ladies give...we need that!" Thanks to all who were able to contribute.

Next I want to give a short overview of our November General Meeting. We had a great time of fellowship with twenty members present. Our program was very inspiring. Julie Arnold, High School Counselor, was our speaker and she challenged us with so many GREAT Ideas on how to encourage students and teachers at the school-really any grade level would benefit. I'm sure we will see lots of activity from each unit and our whole organization from the inspiration we received.

On to New Business. It's almost time for our Cookie Walk! Hope our heads are swimming with ideas of old treats and new goodies you can make for this fun tradition. We're so grateful for all the Church Ladies who work to make this a fun and rewarding event for our United Methodist Women. We can in turn share the proceeds with donations to areas in our church that need extra funds for special projects. Continues on next column.

Invite Your Friends



Adult Classes
Why not join one!!!

Bring the Kids
Fun stuff happens
Every Sunday Morning
Beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Ages Birth thru 3rd Grade

Every Sunday during Worship Service there is a special time.
Kids In Divine Service
 Ages 3-3rd Grade
 Children are dismissed after the Pastor's Welcome.

UMW News Continues:

Please be looking for the sign up sheets for donating cookies and candies, and consider working a shift at the event. Talk to Donna Winters or Marti Retherford if you can't find a sign-up sheet. The Hometown Christmas Event is always the first weekend in December and the Cookie Walk takes place at 37 E Main Street. This year we will try selling cookies Thursday night December 2nd and Friday night December 3rd. We will share in the next newsletter what special project our funds will benefit.

Praying that you can all have a Blessed and Joyful Christmas season as we celebrate the Birthday of our Lord and King Jesus.

Mindy Smith



Thank you to those who have turned in their pledges. If you need a pledge card, stop by or call the Church Office.

To Families of Our Children.

We had workers and little ones in our nursery! If you can be a helper, please let Pastor Nate know.



**United Methodist Women's
Cookie Walk**

across from the Trustee's
Office 37 E Main St

4:00 to 8:00 pm

THURSDAY, December 2nd

FRIDAY, December 3rd



\$10 for Large Box

\$7 for Small Box

**MISSIONS
OPPORTUNITIES**

WORKCAMP NEWS

As many of you are aware, our church has sponsored and participated in week-long annual winter disaster recovery workcamps for many years. The workcamp planned for 2020 to Port St Joe, Florida was canceled due to Covid concerns. One was not planned in 2021 also due to Covid.

We are now taking the first steps in planning a work-camp for March 2022.

This past week I talked with our contact person from 2020. He shared that the VIM (Volunteers in Mission with the United Methodist Church) effort in Port St. Joe had come to end, but that new projects are being planned in Louisiana...most likely in the Lake Charles and Hammond areas. (Hammond isn't too far from Slidell where we went to help in 2006 and 2007.)

While no specific details are available at this time, please mark your calendars for the week of March 6, and or March 13, 2022 if you are at all interested in participating in this mission effort.

I will keep you informed as things progress! Jim Howell



Christmas Eve Service

One Service Only

8:00 p.m.

Candlelight & Communion



**Jefferson Township
Trustee, our Joe
Smith and his wife
Mindy, express their
thanks for all who
have chosen to help
clothe, for the
families of children**

needing assistance this Christmas Season.

FUMC Treasurer Greta Gustin

Year-to-Date revenues \$ 131,655

Year-to-Date expenses \$ 135,362

October 31, Net Loss \$ (3,707)



Fund Balances at October 31, 2021

Operating Expense Fund	29,949
Faith Promise	11,465
Designated Giving	13,556
GOOD Building Fund	11,735
Long Term Savings	47,272
Total in Banks	\$ 113,976

Designated Funds

Adult Work Camp	8,650
Recharge Dinner	733
Youth or CAC	2,850
Plastic Table Fund	420
Memorial Gift - Other	98
Food Pantry	70
UMCOR	50
Pet Deposit	400
Community Garden	284
TOTAL Designated	\$13,556

The rosebud and cradle cross on our Sunday's
altar welcomed little

Roan Vann Lee, son of
Shelby and Andrew Lee.
He was born
November 8th.



Congratulations to the parents, grandparents Carl
and Dina Seffrin, and great grandparent
Don Hilbert. May God richly bless his family.

Upcoming Sermon Series for December and January

Advent Sermon Series

Villains: How to Avoid Their Path of Destruction

Big Idea of the Series: Envisioning the first Christmas without the benefit of hindsight, we will glance at snapshots of those who were near



to the events surrounding Jesus's birth: his parents, the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. Jesus's birth is a welcome invitation to everyone—the rich, the poor, the known and unknown, men, and women. To those who recognize him, he brings hope, peace, joy, and love.



January Sermon Series – Raise Them Up: Parenting In a Hectic World

Big Idea of the Series: This series emphasizes the important role parents and influential adults play in

helping disciple and raise children who love and follow God. The stories and instruction from Scripture teach us what *not* to do, what *to* do, and how to trust God – not only in our own lives but with the lives of others too.

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