

FIRST NEWS AND NOTES

A Newsletter of The First United Methodist Church in Hagerstown IN

December 2022



The season of Advent looks at the coming of Christ from two different perspectives. The first is a celebration of the incarnation, His first coming as the Messiah, Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem. The second is a call to be prepared, alert, and ready for His second coming.

Advent always begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Throughout each Sunday of Advent, we focus on one of the four qualities Jesus brings to us: Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. Traditionally during Advent, there are four candles on a wreath of evergreen; one candle for each week of Advent to celebrate each of the four qualities.

The wreath is shaped in a circle to represent that God is eternal. The four candles on the wreath, are made up of three purple candles to represent Hope, Love, and Peace, and one pink candle, to represent Joy. In the center of the wreath is one larger white candle which is the Christ candle — it is a reminder to us that Jesus is the light of the world.

Advent is a wonderful time to reflect on the reason that Jesus came. Jesus humbly came into the world; He was born in a stable to a young girl named Mary and laid in a manger in the town of Bethlehem. Jesus' coming was predicted almost 700 years before His birth. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us").* Jesus' birth offers hope to mankind. Jesus came to teach us and, to reveal God to us. Jesus also came to reach out to the lost. Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Jesus lived a life without sin so that He could save us all from our sins. Matthew 1:21 says, *And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* Only Jesus could save fallen humanity.

Jesus' work on the cross was the ultimate act of love and grace. He offered Himself as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. Because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, we no longer have the debt of sin hanging over our heads. We have been set free and now have peace with God and can stand ready for His Second Coming. After all, we are called to be on guard; stay alert, and watch for him.

The good news that brings great joy is that no one is beyond God's grace and love. No matter how bad you think you are, you are not beyond God's grace. Jesus came to redeem all of mankind; He loves us and wants to offer us peace and joy. Jesus is the greatest gift that we can receive this Christmas season. He is also the greatest gift we can share with others. This Advent and Christmas season share the message of Jesus with those around you. He is the light of the world; the hope for mankind. *Pastor Nate Eckert*

Missions

by Debra Salhoff, Chair

Jefferson Township Food Pantry thanks HUMC for our continued support. November's collection hit the mark of supplying food items for 100 Thanksgiving takers

Our December Collection includes

Soup and Crackers

Any kind of soup: canned soups (Small & Large)

Box mix soups—package mix soups—
instant cup soups—even Ravioli

Any kind of cracker: crackers that compliment a bowl of soup.

Dollars: cash donations accepted and used to help reach our goal.

Goal: To feed 100 or more persons with a soup and cracker meal.

Donation can be brought to HUMC Café table of Missions or taken to Jefferson Township Office at 47 E Main St.

Donation Date: December 1- 30 th

Church Vision: As disciples who make disciples, we will connect intentionally, listen actively, and love deeply in our relationship with God (who knows and see all actions) and with our Community (who needs our caring love).

Thanks to all who baked and made our **Cookie Walk** a success once again!
This was our 22nd year.



GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

The children's Christmas program with its special music and the retelling of the nativity story is often a touching memory. They all work hard to learn their parts and the songs to share the Christmas story. Their families eagerly smile and encourage their children as they perform their parts. Sometimes the little ones get stage fright and need to find safety with their parents until next year. Others take to the stage like troopers and proudly wave, smile and even call out greetings to their family members making everyone smile and wave back.

A couple of my favorite stories involve the shepherd boys. The costumes were often old bathrobes tied with colorful strips of cloth or ropes as belts. One year the third shepherd was much shorter than the previous years. The little guy struggled mightily to keep up and walk in the much too long robe. He clutched his wooden staff in one hand and tried to keep from tripping by holding up the robe bottom with the other hand. All went well until he had to climb the steps up onto the stage. He fell on the top step and then quickly rolled down the steps like a log. He was unable to free himself from the long robe and sash wrapped tightly around his legs. His fellow shepherds and Joseph came to the rescue and untangled him. Everyone cheered when the valiant determined shepherd made it to his place on the stage.

Another year, the trio of shepherd boys created a little levity. They calmly marched in, took their assigned places and said their lines. The frisky young fellows, each with a long wooden staff, got bored listening to the others doing their parts. One shepherd started using his staff as a pretend rifle to aim at and shoot another shepherd with some sound effects. The second shepherd shot back with even more vivid rifle gunshots. Some chuckles from the audience encouraged them. The third shepherd joined the fray, and the battle was on. They were now shooting at the sheep and the donkey, too. The donkey, a younger brother who knew the rules of this game, fell over in an overly dramatic death scene. The whole church dissolved into quiet chuckles and then louder laughter. The teachers and the boys' parents were horrified. Continued

Continued: Glad Tidings of Great Joy

"Stop that right now!" in loud whispers and then sterner voices adding to the chaos. They quickly disarmed the shepherds and comforted the upset little sheep and angels. The program was soon over, but not forgotten.

Children are often a source of joy in our Christmas celebrations. May your Christmas season be filled with the love and joy of our Lord Jesus as we celebrate his birth. Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!

Paula Guth, the Church Mouse

Christmas Eve*

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Cookies

& Carols

December 24, 7:30 p.m.

199 S. Perry Street

Hagerstown, IN

Cookies, Cocoa, and Cider served from 7:30 - 8pm

Carols and the Christmas story begin at 8pm



*The Staff shares to you, our friends, a very Merry Christmas!
Happy New Year with God as your Source, guidance, love!*

United Women in Faith News by President Mindy Smith

Coming to the end of the year usually puts us all in a reflective mood. As I write this item for our last newsletter of 2022, years end is still a few weeks out but let's look back at What Memories we've made together.



We got a new name back on March 23, 1869, eight women formed the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. We've gone through many changes over the years. Some I remember from my lifetime. Wesleyan Service Guild, Women's Society of Christian Service and most recently United Methodist Women. Hopefully we have

never lost sight of this part of our purpose. As stated in the Women's Society of Christian Service, "Our purpose shall be to help women grow in the knowledge and experience of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and to challenge them to respond to God's redemptive purpose in the world." We certainly need to share Jesus in our hurting world now as much as ever before. Let's keep working United Women In Faith!

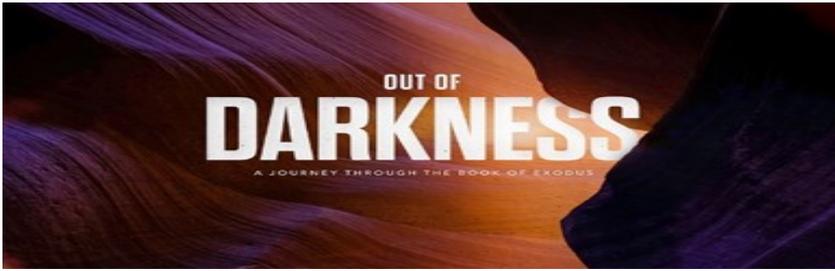
We've had some Inspiring District meetings we've been able to attend and be challenged and inspired to "expand Concepts of Mission" as our current purpose encourages us to do. We've had fun together, at our General Meeting in July we had our Summer Picnic and wore our 50's poodle skirts, saddle shoes and Killer Jackets. We were being a creative, Supportive Fellowship.

We've learned of New Missions close to home when our own Heather Eckert presented a program about her job at A Better Way. Once again expanding our concepts of Mission and participating in Global Ministry through our financial support of these important community outreach's. We were definitely a creative supportive group as we worked together through two successful Money Making Projects over the Fall months. And again as we blessed our Community with various donations from our earnings.

Once again at our November General Meeting we experienced being a Creative, Supportive Fellowship as we worked together to feed at least 17 Guests and in turn be entertained by the ones who were members of "The Sweet Sounds of Star Valley".

We have two more opportunity's to be creative and supportive as our congregation comes together to make cookies and work together at our annual Cookie Walk Thursday, December 1st and Friday, December 2nd from 4 to 8 p. m. in the Jefferson Townships Trustee's building at 37 East Main St. We will use the proceeds from the Cookie Walk to participate in Ministry in our Community. We will share with you in January how we use these funds. The way we intend to do Mission globally is something we are calling "College Encouragement Gift's where we try to send messages of love and encouragement to our active college students as they go into finals week at the end of their fall semesters. Marti Retherford will have the cards available for you to sign, out soon in the Café.

We've had a blessed and fruitful year whatever name we choose to go by. I challenge us to remember this scripture as we head into 2023, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work" Ecc4:9. As we look back—however far you want to look, 1869 it was true, 2022 it's true yet again, together we've had "a good return for our hard work". With prayer and working together we can continue to "have a good return" as we strive to be Creative, Supportive missionaries doing Global Ministry for Jesus.



Jan/Feb Sermon Series – Out of Darkness: A Journey Through the Book of Exodus

Big Idea of the Series: This series describes the escape of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and the nature and character of God revealed along their journey. Exodus reveals a God who liberates, provides, protects, cares for, and gives an identity to his people, Israel. This same God does this for his people today as well.

- January 1st – God’s Sovereignty – Exodus 1
- January 8th – Calling and Excuses – Exodus 2-4
- January 15th – Pride vs Power – Exodus 4-7
- January 22nd – God vs gods – Exodus 7-9
- January 29th – Constant Complaining – Exodus 13-15
- February 5th – Ten Commandments – Exodus 20
- February 12th – God’s Presence and Love – Exodus 26-27
- February 19th – Remembrance and Redemption – Exodus 12

Bring the Kids Every Sunday Morning.

Begins at 9 a.m.



Nursery is available every Sunday

During Church



Kids in Devine Service)

Adult Classes meet!

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2023 is going to be a GREAT year for our church! As a church, we have a desire to connect with each other and our community. To dive deeper into connection with each other, *beginning in January, 5th Sundays* (months with 5 Sundays in them) will be B&B Sundays.

****Want to know more? Stay tuned to Facebook and church announcements for more information!**