

The Clarion

December-January 2020-21

First UMC is a welcoming, accepting, caring and diverse Christian community committed to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people through faith-based worship, exciting programs and outreach ministry.

Ponderings from your Pastor

46 And Mary[a] said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

Luke 1:46-49

I believe there may have never been an advent season where we collectively understood anticipation so well. Between the eight-month long pandemic and the moments of struggle around politics, race, and medical opinion, we feel the yearning for grace and love. I listen and hear a deep desire to move on from the difficulty of this time and return to some semblance of normalcy. I hear the even deeper fear that a return to what was normal before may be unlikely at all. We name this with truth, naming as well that we are in need of hope, love, joy, and peace.

The good news is, with faith, we believe that there is something to hope for. We see in community that we are bound together even in the most challenging times. We are reminded in the gift of Christ, who came into a world of chaos and noise, that God chooses to be intentionally with us. We see in birth, life and ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, that hope can prevail against any odds. As we look towards the close of a difficult year, we do so in faith, knowing that God prevails in our lives. While acknowledging the true feelings of despair, we also must see with thankfulness, the goodness of God. We continue to be the church, we continue to love God in Christ, and we continue to hold up one another in community and prayer.

Just as Mary, the mother of Jesus, saw in the anticipation of the Christ child, we too must rejoice in spirit for all that God has provided, and live faithfully in hope for all that is to come. As we anticipate what the new year will bring, I leave you with this prayer:

Holy God, although much has happened in the last year that we could not have anticipated, we earnestly pray that you open our eyes once again to the possibility of new and renewed life. It is easy to get bogged down in worry and frustration over what could not be, but help us to see instead all the joy that is still to be had. From the coming of God incarnate in the gift of Jesus Christ, let us experience our own epiphany of love. Help us to know that whatever we do, centered on your guiding love, we do so in anticipation of the change we ourselves can be in the world. Just like the Christ child birthed into a world in need of God's grace and love, let us be the voice of peace that stands against the hate, the voice of hope that stands against despair, the voice of justice that stands against the divisions, and the voice of joy that sees possibility breaking forth like light from the darkness. In anticipation of and in the realization of birth, help us to faithfully believe that you, O God, are bringing something new. Bless our journey into a new year full of new potential and joy. In Jesus Christ's name we pray. Amen.

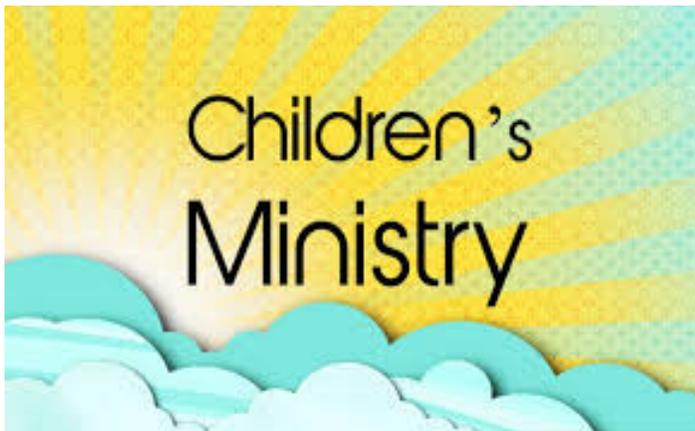
With Hope,
Pastor Dan





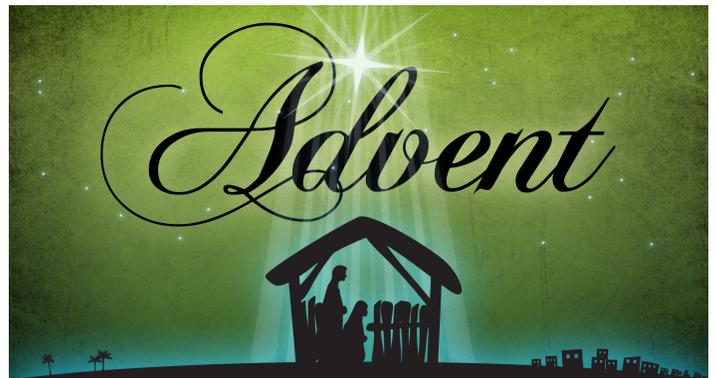
Youth Group

Our youth group continues to meet in-person with masks and social distancing. We meet in Wesley Hall each **Sunday from 4:00-5:30**. We play games, engage in Bible Study, and pray for one another. Our Christmas Party will be **Saturday, December 19** and will be a family event. After a Scavenger Hunt/Road Rally, all participants will return to the church for cocoa and cookies. Youth Families should RSVP by Sunday December 6 to either Sydney Olszewski or Rev. Alicea.



Baptism Buddies

When a baby is baptized, our congregation promises to surround the child with love promising to help the child develop faith and learn to love God. Did you ever wonder how you can fulfill this promise? Here is an opportunity for you to help a child learn to pray and to know they are loved and cared for. As a Baptism Buddy you are paired with one of our infants/toddlers when they are baptized and take responsibility for praying for your buddy. If you are interested in becoming a Baptism Buddy, please email Rev. Alicea at alwharpist30@gmail.com. There will be a zoom information meeting for all Baptism Buddies to answer your questions and talk about your responsibilities.



Advent Mission Opportunity

An Advent Calendar is used to countdown the days until Christmas. Traditionally, the calendar has 24 little "doors" to open behind which is a piece of chocolate or other treat. A Reverse Advent Calendar is, well, the reverse of this idea. God's greatest gift to us is the gift of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Eve. This precious gift is the reason behind our tradition of giving gifts. This Reverse Advent Calendar is meant to focus your thoughts and actions on giving instead of receiving – a Christ-centered idea.

Creating a Reverse Advent Calendar is simple. Choose a sturdy box, basket, or bag. Place it in a location where you will see it each day so you will be reminded of its purpose. Each day of Advent, November 29-December 24, place one food item inside your Reverse Advent Calendar and say a prayer for those who will receive your gift. Bring your filled bags, baskets, or boxes to the church on Sunday, January 3 between Noon and 2:00 where Rev. Alicea, Sydney Olszewski, Sandy Paul, and members of the youth group will be on hand to unload your donations. Food donations will be taken to Father Bob's Food Pantry during the first week of January.

We will not host The Macomb Warming Center this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, so instead of the normal donations of socks and underwear, we hope you will joyfully consider giving the gift of food to those who have found themselves to be food insecure in this time. Father Bob's Food Pantry requests only Non-Perishable Regular Size Food Items (no large sizes), non-breakable containers, and no expired food.

Recommended Donations include:

Canned Soup, Canned Vegetables/Fruits, Macaroni and Cheese, Peanut Butter Jelly, Canned Tuna Fish/Chicken, Spaghettios, Hamburger Helper, Mashed Potatoes, Spaghetti Sauce, Cereal, Applesauce, Pasta or Rice Mixes

Ministry Updates and Thank You Notes

Notes from your Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee met on November 18, 2020 via zoom.

Chairperson Report:

- Change in the language format of the Guiding Principles; section BP 1.5.6 Terms of Service. This change involved changing from a chart format to a verbal explanation in order to prevent having to make yearly changes to the document. This did not change the established definition or terms of the service dates.

Finance:

- Financially, the budget is within the 10 month budget.
- An Application of Forgiveness for the funds received through the CAREs program has been submitted. According to the procedures, the funds we received may not have to be paid back but the application must be submitted for consideration.

Pastor/Parish:

- All staff was presented with a small token of appreciation during Staff Appreciation Month in October.
- Staff evaluations will be conducted in the near future.

Trustee:

- The heat in the building has been turned on.
- The roof has been repaired and noted that it will not be too much longer before we need to install a new roof.
- The lift in the fellowship hall has been repaired.

Pastoral Report:

- Approval for Pastor Dan to take an 8 week paternity leave. This period of time is allowed by the conference. Pastor Dan explained that he will not be available (except for an emergency) for the first 2 weeks following the birth of their child. After that he will in periodically to make sure the worship service is ready and respond to any immediate needs or questions. He will be preaching 4 weeks out of that 8 week period. Visiting pastors have agreed to fill the pulpit via video recordings.
- Stewardship cards are arriving but mail to the church has been delayed. At the November 22nd Worship Service these pledges will be presented.

Deacon Report:

- On line Sunday School has begun following the same format as VBS. Youth group continues to meet and weekly story hours are done via zoom.

Next meeting:

- Our next meeting will be held in early January to prepare the 2021 Budget.

Your Leadership Team



Jerri and I would like to thank everyone at First Church for their prayers, cards, and thoughts on the passing of Jerri's cousin Barb. She had been diagnosed with Covid-19 and it was such an unexpected loss. Take care and be safe.

Blessings, Bill and Jerri Wiza

Thank you to everyone at First United Methodist Church for all your generosity this past year and for helping me with my new apartment. God bless you.
Jeff Murphy

Our Thoughts and Prayers are with...

Our Church Family

Judy Alger, Wes Ballard, Ross Champion, Nancy Donahue, Jamie Brownlee, Joyce Wells

Grieving

Ralph Brody, Russell L. Stevens, Jeri Wiza's cousin, Barb, Richard Swift

Our Friends and Family

Rev. Alicea's uncle Dan, Rick and Nancy's Daughter-in-law, Jenna, Jim Brown's dad, Joan Reitzel Parnagian

Our Homebound

Jo & Joe Beaudette, Marilyn Jean Borow, Carl Cendrowski, Shirley Champion, Irene Cloud, Karen Loos, Gerald & Barbara Pagett, Fred Thielk, Rosalie Tinkham, Patsy Weagel, Gladys Wiggins

Those Serving in the Armed Forces

Scott Bean, Adam Donahue, Brian Hill, Steven C. Kelly, Tami Morgan, Rande Phan

College Students

Brianna Akers, Michaela Baker, Emily Beebe, Hannah Berg, Annica Brocker, Nathan Buchanan, Nathan Clifton, Jessica Evans, Draven Forbes, Jaryd Forbes, Jordan Gould, Josh Gould, Sean Hathaway, Kyle Hill, Nina Hill, Jackson Kelly, Justin Keppler, Ashley Krynski, Stephanie Lyskawa, Tighe Maclean, Nick Nielsen, Jordan Olszewski, Sydney Olszewski, Hope Reyna, Mitchell Salisbury, Kyle Sieben, Amy Beth Simon, Alaina Spratt, Tina Tinkham

Contact Information

2020 First UMC Leadership Team

Linda McLatcher: Chair
Tim Howlett: Finance Chair
Harry Kosmala: Business Manager
Julie Strayer: Pastor Parish Chair
Tom Baber: Chair of Trustees
Justine Olszewski: Co-Chair of Trustees
Linda L. Johnston: Lay Leader
Lois Hill: Lay Member to Annual Conference
Linda Strait: Secretary
Rev. Dan Hart: Lay Nominations Chair
Rev. Alicea Williams: Children and Youth Ministry



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