

The Parish Visitor

December, 2016



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The State of the Church Address

by Rev. Mark

It has been QUITE a year! 2016 began with a time of prayer and fasting that culminated in the 24-Hour Prayer Vigil. That Sunday, we celebrated Commitment Sunday- the day we had the opportunity to make our financial pledge for the year. Confirmation class started in February with 11 young people!

The Easter season started with our Fat Tuesday on Ash Wednesday pancake dinner followed by the Ash Wednesday worship service. Then, on March 13, we celebrated Confirmation Sunday, baptizing 9 and bringing 11 into membership. Easter was celebrated on Sunday, March 27. Between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, nearly 900 folks worshiped with us! As the first quarter came to a close, we had performed 12 baptisms and brought in 16 new members!

April started with a huge event and a crushing loss. On the morning of The Journey- a massive success- we found out that our beloved organist, Pat Olson, had passed away. And while many tears were shed that morning, everyone "soldiered up" and made The Journey the amazing event that it was. The rest of the second quarter saw the Survivor's Dinner, the Relay For Life event, among other things. Rhubarb Fest broke every record we had regarding number of meals served, number of pies sold and amount of money raised. At the close of June, we were up to 26 new members and 14 baptisms.

The third quarter saw the launch of one of the most ambitious things a church can do- a third Sunday morning worship service. But before that, we had a building full of people as we held Vacation Bible School! The rest of the summer was dedicated to preparing for the new worship service. But on Wednesday, August 17, we welcomed Father Dominic- the Bread Monk. He shared a wonderful evening with us. Then, on August 21, we experienced the Soft Launch of that service! 111 people gathered that first Sunday! On 9/11, the official Hard Launch of that new service happened. 5 more new members and another baptism were added.

The fourth quarter has seen more amazing things. Wednesday Night Fellowship growing and strengthening. A record-breaking Trunk or Treat. A record-breaking Operation Christmas Child Shoebox collection. An incredible Follow the Star Holiday Bazaar. As of this writing, with December still to go, we have brought in 36 new members and performed 15 baptisms. More than 50% of the United Methodist churches in this country will bring in NO new members this year! We will end the year with a weekly average worship attendance of about 275 and a weekly average Christian Education attendance of 125. Both of those numbers are AMAZING!

(continued on page 2)

SPECIAL DATES:

- December 1 Caring Hearts Food Prep 9AM
- December 1 United Methodist Women Exec Meeting 4:45PM
- December 2 Salvation Army Bell Ringing 9AM- 2PM
- December 2 Holly Days Light Parade & Live Nativity 5:30PM
- December 4 Communion & Food Pantry Sunday
- December 4 Children's Christmas Pageant 10:30AM
- December 5 Finance Meeting 6PM
- December 5 Trustees Meeting 7PM
- December 11 Christmas Cantata 8AM, 10:30AM and 6PM
- December 11 United Methodist Men Luncheon 11:30AM
- December 13 Work @ Food Pantry 5:30-7:30PM
- December 13 UMW Fellowship Christmas Baskets 6PM
- December 15 Naomi Wesleyan Circle 11:30 AM
- December 15 Caring Hearts Food Prep 1PM
- December 16 Work @ Food Pantry 8AM-noon
- December 18 All Church Caroling 2PM
- December 19 UM Men 6PM
- December 20 Parish Visitor Deadline 8AM
- December 23 Office Closed for Christmas
- December 24 Christmas Eve Services 7PM & 11PM
- December 25 Christmas Day Service 9AM
- December 30 Office Closed for New Years

(Continued from page 1)

This was just a partial list of all the things we did this year. I could fill this entire newsletter with the ministries this church offered this year. We are doing more and more things that connect people to Jesus Christ. And that means that more and more people are stepping up in powerful ways to help make that happen. Thank you for that!

The truth is that, as a church grows, one of two things will happen: they will either continue to adjust to handle the growth or they will contract back to what they can handle. I have experienced both realities in my 20 years of ministry and I simply don't have a gear for a church to pull back from doing God's work.

That means we have some stretching to do. The 2017 budget features a 9.98% increase over 2016. That is a bold budget. And one of the reasons for that increase is the approval by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the Finance Committee and the Administrative Council to hire a 20 hour/week Associate Pastor in the new year. The truth is that, according to a time study that was done this year, your church staff is absolutely working at full capacity. The only way to proactively keep up with the growth is to add more staff to help shoulder the load. And additional staff means a greater commitment to supporting the finances of the church.

I invite you to pray about this process. We will soon begin the task of accepting resumes, interviewing potential candidates and doing a LOT of praying! Finding the RIGHT person is far more important than filling the position. We stand on the threshold of even more amazing things. And I, for one, can't WAIT to see what God has in store for us! It is truly an honor to be your pastor!

Current/New Sermon Series

by Rev. Mark

On Sunday, November 27, we swerved and went a whole different direction! Growing up, Sundays were dominated by the Wonderful World of Disney. Each Sunday evening, "Uncle Walt" would come into my living room and introduce a story that helped me better understand the world in some way. This Christmas season, we are taking a nostalgic look BACK...to help us take a dramatic look forward. Each week of Advent- the Christmas season- **A Very Disney Christmas** will focus on three things:

1. a portion of the Christmas story as found in the New Testament Gospels
2. Old Testament prophecy about the coming of the Messiah
3. a classic Disney song that helps inform the theme for the day.

The remaining weeks of the series look like this:

Sunday, December 4, 2016- Hakuna Matata (Luke 1:26-38)

Refusing to worry helps create a deep and abiding peace.

(Numbers 24:17a, Isaiah 7:14)

Sunday, December 11, 2016- I Wanna Be Like You (Matthew 2:1-12)

Knowing to Whom you look helps create a strong sense of commitment.

(Micah 5:2, Isaiah 9:6-7)

Sunday, December 18, 2016- A Whole New World (Luke 2:6-20)

Embracing the miraculous can bring about rebirth.

(Numbers 24:17a, Micah 5:2)

Saturday, December 24, 2016- When You Wish Upon a Star (Luke 2:6-20)

Recognizing the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary helps create a powerful sense of hope. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Sunday, December 25, 2016- You've Got a Friend in Me (John 1:1-14)

Following Emmanuel- God with us- is the best form of guidance.

Bring the kids. Bring the grandkids. Bring the neighbors. Pull up a chair. Grab a seat on the couch. Get ready for everything old to be new again this Christmas!



Pastor's New and Current Bible Studies

Job: Waiting on God in Difficult Times

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Tuesday morning Bible Study

WHEN: Tuesdays @ 9AM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Cafe'

WHY: The life of Job provides a definitive guide to the problem of pain and explores some of life's biggest questions: Why does God let bad things happen to good people? Can seemingly random pain have a purpose? Can you trust a just God in an unfair world? When will He finally show up? Examine these questions and learn how you can take shelter in your Savior through life's dark storms.

WHAT ELSE: The books are...FREE!

The Gospel of Luke

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Wednesday morning MEN'S Bible Study

WHEN: Wednesdays @ 6:30AM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Cafe' next to the sanctuary

WHY: With a historian's precision, Luke's Gospel shows painstaking care both in detail and in expression. Of equal distinction is the universal appeal of the Gospel. Dr. William Barclay wrote that this Gospel makes " Christ the open door for all without reserve. " In many areas that were either minimized or neglected by the other Gospel writers, Luke's account is more complete, emphasizing prayer, the dignity of women, and praise of God. Barclay's insightful comments help each of us to see the infinitude of God's love through Luke's eyes.

WHAT ELSE: The books are \$15



Matthew: A Guide to the New Daily Study Bible

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Wednesday evening Bible Study

WHEN: Wednesdays @ 6PM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Cafe' next to the sanctuary

WHY: Responding to the need for fresh, practical, and affordable resources for personal and group study, Westminster John Knox Press is pleased to present a new series of Gospel study guides that will supplement William Barclay's New Daily Study Bible. Each of the slim volumes will be divided into sections offering a page-long excerpt from the New Daily Study Bible followed by questions to encourage group discussion and personal reflection, and suggestions for praying and applying Scripture to our daily lives.

WHAT ELSE: The books are...FREE!

Current Women's Bible Study

WHAT: Experiencing Spiritual Renewal, Joanne Harris' NEW Women's Study

WHEN: Tuesdays at 2PM, beginning January 10th, 2017

WHERE: Fellowship Cafe

WHY: Every athlete, performer, and artist trains to reach his or her goals. As Christians, our goal is to be more like Jesus. Spiritual practices are the ways we train to be like Jesus. In this 12-session small group Women's Bible study, participants will look at two types of spiritual disciplines—those that are primarily active and call us to do something and those that are primarily inactive and call us to undo something. Through this study, participants will look at familiar spiritual practices like prayer, study, service, and fellowship through the lens of Scripture and find a renewed zest for life and loving God.

WHAT ELSE: Books are \$5

I am excited to be able to dig deeper into the Word and learn about these women and see how it applies to my life today. Come and join me! - Joanne

Advent Worship Opportunities

Advent, the time of waiting that leads to Christmas Day, officially began on Sunday, November 27th this year. **A Very Disney Christmas** will be offered at all 3 morning services. (See accompanying article) Here are all of the special Christmas opportunities that will be offered during December:

Friday, December 2: Holly Days and the Electric Light Parade

9AM-2PM- Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Walmart

5PM- Live Nativity uptown

5:30PM- Participating in the Parade



Sunday, December 4: The 2nd Sunday in Advent

We will light the second **Advent Candle** - the Candle of Peace- at all 3 services.

10:30AM Worship- Children's Christmas Program (see accompanying article)

Sunday, December 11: The 3rd Sunday in Advent

We will light the third **Advent Candle** - the Candle of Joy- at all 3 services.

8AM, 10:30AM and 6PM- Choir Cantata

Sunday, December 18: The 4th Sunday in Advent

We will light the fourth **Advent Candle** - the Candle of Love- at all 3 services.

2PM- All-Church Christmas Caroling

Saturday, December 24: Christmas Eve

We will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with 2 very special Candlelight Services.

At 7PM, we will light the Christ candle and sing LOTS of great Christmas carols!

At 11PM, BOTH the Chancel and Bell Choirs will share their marvelous gifts with us. In addition, we will light the Christ candle and sing LOTS of great Christmas carols!

Both Christmas Eve services will be built around a message of faith and revelation- **When You Wish Up-on a Star** (Luke 2:6-20) We will focus on the fact that a baby in a manger, Who split time in half, is the greatest gift of all. Both services will end with a candlelight singing of "Silent Night".

Christmas Eve is truly a night that changed the world. Please take an hour out of your holiday schedule to join your church family in celebrating the arrival of a baby in a manger who offers us grace, hope, peace, and love!

Sunday, December 25: Christmas Day

One worship service will be offered at 9AM. We will sing Christmas Carols, read Scripture and talk about the fact that we have a friend in Jesus as we wrap up our Christmas sermon series.

Come to worship throughout Advent expecting God to show up in powerful ways and touch your life!

Holly Days/Electric Light Parade

Surely you have attended Aledo's Holly Days and the Electric Light Parade that kick off the holiday season in town? Well...now you have a chance to be IN it! On Friday, December 2nd, we will be participating in two separate yet connected ministries associated with the event.

- From 5PM-6:30PM, we will feature a live Nativity uptown. Complete with costumed actors representing the characters from the first Christmas and a group of carolers singing Christmas songs, this is a GREAT way for us to reach out to the community.
- At 5:30PM, we will also be hosting an entry in the parade. Our church bus will be decorated with lights. Up to 14 people are invited to ride on the bus and wave at those in attendance!

If you would like to be a part of either of these fun activities, contact the church office or watch for sign-up sheets in worship to get your name on the list! Let them know if you want to be in the Nativity...or the bus!

The Blessing of a Bad Christmas Gift

We have all experienced it. You know what I am talking about...that moment when you receive a bad Christmas gift. It could be the horrible fuzzy cat face sweater or underwear and socks your grandparents give you instead of the TURBO X Drone you asked for/wanted. It's incredibly awkward as you

search for a way to say thank you without revealing how discouraged you are, but maybe we should stop and focus on the ONE GIFT that never disappoints. This Christmas season, regardless of what "unique" item gets added to your wish list, let's be excited about our Jesus, our Savior. He brought you a gift you NEEDED...the gift of salvation.

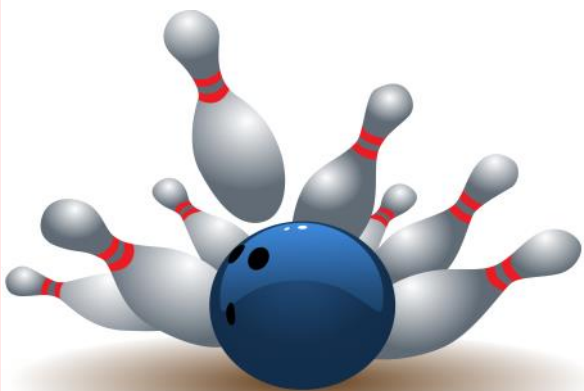


John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him."

The truth is, God could have chosen to be an awful gift giver; He could have given us what we deserved. He could have reminded us of all our constant mistakes and selfish ways, but He didn't. He NEVER wanted to condemn us, instead He offers us grace. He chose to save us from our sins, a gift that can truly leave us all speechless!

So the next time you unwrap a gift that makes you choke down laughter or pain, stop to remember our God, who gave you the BEST gift. His salvation will change your life forever; it's a free gift that continues to give in all areas of our world. Also, if you know the joy provided by the Messiah born in a manger, share His love this Christmas and every day that follows! Amen.

SR High Bowling Night
Friday, December 9, 2016
From 5-7pm
Cost: \$5.00



AllTAG Members
Christmas Classic Movie Afternoon
December 17, 2016
From 10am-12:30pm
Time for Popcorn and Candy Canes!



FOLLOW THE STAR HOLIDAY BAZAAR THANK YOU

A HUGE thank you to all who prepared food, donated money, made craft items, provided Nativities, set up or cleaned up areas, and served in any way at the Follow the Star Holiday Bazaar. We connected many people to Jesus Christ through our love and fellowship; and, as a bonus, our profits will be distributed to local missions! A complete summary of the Holiday Bazaar activities will be reported in the January Parish Visitor.

Carol Brown and Ruth Dulaney

CARING HEARTS BASKETS FOR THOSE NEEDING EXTRA CHRISTMAS CHEER

We will be preparing our annual Christmas Baskets on December 14th after Wednesday Night Fellowship. All are welcome to join us in sharing Christ's love by preparing and delivering these gifts.

Please bring canned goods, cookies, fruit, and packaged food to the kitchen by December 13th.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Away in a manger (Sunday December 4th) somewhere in Bethlehem (our church sanctuary) the children of our congregation will gather to tell the story of Jesus' birth. Featuring costumed shepherds, wise men, animals and the Holy Family, this program will be interactive- the congregation will "sing through" the presentation as we lift up the classic carols of the season.

All the children of our church family 2 years through 8th grade are asked to participate. We provide the costumes. Please have your child at the church on Sunday, December 4th by 9AM. We will meet downstairs in the room adjacent to the dining room to begin rehearsal. We will keep the children together until the time to enter the sanctuary and complete the pageant. All high school helpers are needed and parents are welcome to help dress (and corral) our participants!

Plan on having YOUR child or grandchild at the church at 9AM to participate and plan on coming AND bringing someone with you to experience this wonderful event! It is truly a blessing to bring this story of our Savior's birth to life with His precious children.



ALEDO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH RELAY FOR LIFE TEAM FUND-RAISER SCHWAN'S CARES

Giving back to your community never tasted so delicious! By placing an order through Schwans.com, a portion of the sales will come back in support of Relay For Life of Mercer County. Your money helps the American Cancer Society fund groundbreaking cancer research, crucial patient care services, and prevention and early detection programs.

Visit <https://www.schwanscares.com/c/29956>. Click on "Shop to Give", or call 1-855-870-7208, using 29956 as the Mercer County identification number. We will receive 20% on orders if you order online or by phone. We will also receive 40% if you buy a \$25.00 E gift card. You can buy an E gift card, then use it on your order. This special offer ends December 16, 2016. Over 350 delicious foods are available to be delivered right to your door. You may use a debit or credit card, check, or cash.

Thank you for helping the Mercer County Relay for Life Methodist Church team!

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/01/1973– Bill & Kris Taylor
 12/02/1972– Neil & Pamela Truman
 12/07/1991– Tim & Jennifer Thompson
 12/22/1973– Charles & Connie Alexander
 12/23/1954– Earl & Barbara Etheridge
 12/31/1949– Charles & Ella Luallen



UM Women Golden Age Birthdays

12/07– Renee Forber
 12/07– Marge Lloyd
 12/08– Verla Thompson



The deadline for the next
Parish Visitor is

Tuesday December 20th
at 8am.

Please have all articles submitted
by this date!

THOSE WE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS

Aley/infection
 Hank & Betty Allan
 James Allen
 Grant Anderson
 Bishop Beard
 Caleb
 John & Bev Carlin
 Dawn Chapel
 Devan/homeless
 Jin Droste
 Erma Dobbins
 Adam Douglas
 John Downey family
 Brenda Dunbar
 Lindsey Ekblad
 Chris Engstrom
 Diane Engstrom
 Ron Engstrom
 Paul Engwall
 Sandi & Brooke Fausett
 Sonja Fell
 Feruz & family in Etheopia
 Lyn & Don Franks
 Carol Freeman
 Gail
 Jeff & Katrina Gerber &
 family/lost home in fire

Zack Glenn
 Ted Granquist/cancer
 Carolyn Hanson family
 Rev Mark and family
 Michael Harris
 Pam Heath
 Brian Hofer
 Kathy Keller/health
 Beverly Haney
 Dalon Helm
 Keaton Helm
 Dorothy Hiscocks
 Parker Hopkins
 Annie Inman
 Isaiah
 Katie
 Kimberly & Donny
 Aubrey King/cancer
 Wayne King
 Allison Kuk
 Tiffanee Lloyd
 Austin M
 Michael Maynard
 Baby Merrick/heart surgery
 Mick Miller
 Monica & Robert
 Nikki

Bonnie Peterson
 Bill Pollock/recovery
 Bryce Rathje
 Renee Rethman/heart surgery
 Dylan Reid
 Mary Rillie/health
 Sheila Spencer
 Nick Staves/leukemia
 Irvin Tharp/heart
 Kenny Tharp
 Marvin Tharp
 Annie Thirtyacre
 Alena Thomas/lupus
 Pam Truman/platelets
 Marilyn Wagler
 Alice Wainright
 Bill Wilson
 Kathy Zimmerman
 Shut-ins/Nursing Home Resi-
 dents
 Military & families
 All ill/in hospitals
 Our nation & world
 AUMC members & families
 Mental health
 Unity for our country

Mercer County Schools
 Administration, Teachers, Students
 and Staff
 National and Local Governmental
 Leaders



THANK YOU!

Thank you, thank you, thank you. United Methodist Women Sunday/Golden Age Lunch was a HUGE success! The turn-out of both Golden Age ladies and members of the congregation present to honor them was outstanding.

The biggest thank-you is extended to Serving Committee 2, led by Deb Swank (thanks to Stan, too!) and Jean-nine Kenney, for cooking the meal, and to everyone who brought salads and desserts. 167 were served. It takes a monumental effort to line up that much food and that many volunteers. Thanks, too, to all the men and youth who helped.

Our church family rocks!

Mary Flint and Molly Joseph UMW co-presidents

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is defined as managing another's property and that is one of the most important responsibilities of the Stewardship Committee of the Aledo United Methodist Church. The "another" is both the congregation and also God. We open each of our monthly meetings asking for God to direct our thoughts and actions to being good stewards. Through October we have, I believe, been good stewards as our monetary income is only behind our expenditures by a little over \$3,000.00. We have the opportunity to be ahead by the end of the calendar year as long as each of us continues to give as we have committed, either by our annual pledge or our regular offering. When we factor in the generous support for a new keyboard/organ, we are all doing a good job of being a steward of God's property. We all want to finish strong as we connect others to Jesus Christ. As a point of illustration, I was so moved by the love shown by a follower of Christ in the waiting room at the University of Iowa Hospital as I saw a young woman who was battling cancer get up from her seat and go over and pray with another young woman. The first young woman had a t-shirt on, the front showing the name of the farm that she and her husband owned, and on the back the scripture from Matthew 9:37 "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." That Bible verse is now etched on the back of our tombstone in Mt. Zion Cemetery for all to see and ponder. Don't we each want to be one of those workers by being the steward that God has called us to be? Help your church finish the year strong as we have an even bolder year planned for 2016.

Submitted by Ron Engstrom, Stewardship and Finance Committee Chairperson

NURSING HOME CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Every year the churches of Mercer County unite to donate small Christmas gifts to the residents of Aledo's two nursing homes. They try to give each resident at least one gift. This year is no exception. Last year both places were VERY appreciative of our gifts.

- Small fleece lap blankets
- Dressy scarves and costume jewelry
- Diabetic socks
- Purse-pack or cubed tissues
- Lotion
- Stamps and stationery
- Candy, regular or sugar-free
-



- Slipper socks with grips on bottom
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Shower gel
- Deodorant
- After shave
- Christmas wrapping paper, tape, and tags

All gifts should be UNWRAPPED. Please NO powder or open-backed slippers. Bring your donations to the church office or get them to me by Wed., Dec 7. Thank you in advance for making Christmas just a little bit brighter for our nursing home residents.

Mary Flint



Connection Coins For December

The Connection Coins (or as Rev. Mark calls them, the “thinly-veiled Pringles cans”!) are doing great things in the life of the Aledo UMC! On the 2nd Sunday of each month, during the Children’s Moment, the ushers pass around those cans. You are encouraged to drop your change in- although we WILL accept “folding money”! And that change goes toward helping fund a ministry within the church.

This month (December 11th), the Connection Coin offering will go toward our Helping Hand Fund. This fund has a VERY specific reason for being- to help folks who are in need. Over the years, it has provided gas money for people to get to work or the doctor, helped pay an electric bill or a rent payment and get food in someone's refrigerator...just to name a few. It is an anonymous fund- no one but Rev. Mark knows who receives the help. 100% of the money that you put in the cans that day will go toward helping this ministry continue to reach more people in the name of God! What a GREAT way to help connect people to Jesus Christ. So bring your change on December 11th!

ALEDO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH BUDGET NARRATIVE FOR 2017

Here is an overview of the church budget for 2017. We want to thank each of you who make the ministries of our church possible through your commitments and contributions. Hopefully, this narrative will help each of us to see how our gifts are used and what a difference they make.

Each year our church budget is based on the careful recommendation of each church committee. Each is “ministry-based,” estimating the actual cost of performing the ministries and missions entrusted to them.

Based on our best planning, the Finance and Stewardship Committee, believe that for 2017 we will need \$347,811 to support the missions and ministries of the Aledo United Methodist Church. This is an increase of approximately \$31,000 over last year’s budget and a 10% increase. Of course, this will only happen if we can anticipate a ten percent increase in ministry income!

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee recommended a 2% increase in salaries for current staff and 5% for Rev. Mark. Rev. Mark’s health insurance also increased \$1,200.00 for next year. After much discussion the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee also recommended that our church include in our 2017 budget an allocation of \$15,600 for an Associate Pastor. Recommendations from the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee represent \$22,322 of the \$31,000 increase.

Conference obligations increased \$1,464 for 2017. Other increases include \$500 for youth ministries, \$1,000 for building and liability insurance, \$500 for office supplies, \$1,000 for Sunday School materials and books and \$1,000 for Wed. Night Fellowship and kitchen supplies. Our 2017 budget was approved by the Administrative Board and Charge Conference in October.

This increase of 10% in our budget for next year is a challenge that the Finance and Stewardship Committee feels comfortable recommending to our congregation. It will require sacrificial giving not only by those presently supporting the ministries of our church, but also by those who have not yet shared in this collective responsibility up to now.

If you have any questions, please contact me or someone from the Finance and Stewardship Committee.

Dwight Reynolds, Treasurer

Operation Christmas Child 2016

Thank You

Just after unloading and bringing all of this year's Operation Christmas Child boxes into the collection facility, our group of volunteers joined hands and prayed over them. Spoken words of praise and thanksgiving were offered up to God along with a plea that these boxes find the children who need them most. As I stood there with the group and offered up my own prayers, I could not ignore the warmth I felt inside knowing that, in some small way, I was part of a loving congregation who came together in yet another way to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Although I shouldn't be, I am always amazed at the love and generosity that is shown for this mission.

Some may liken Operation Christmas Child to putting a letter in a bottle and casting it in the ocean since we have absolutely no way of knowing where these boxes will land. We don't know which child will have their life changed by the knowledge that they are loved. We don't know what family will come to know Jesus Christ because of a small shoebox gift. Finally, we don't know where these boxes will cause a congregation to grow or a new church to generate. You know what...we really don't need to know. Our job is to show the love of Jesus Christ to others..... and let Him take it from there. I can't think of a better place to put our trust.

This is not Joan's mission, it's not Reverend Mark's mission, and it's certainly not my mission. It's not even an Aledo United Methodist mission. This mission belongs to everyone who participated in any way. Whether you provided full boxes, donated money or individual items, gave of your time to fill boxes, or covered this mission with your prayers...thank you. Because of your generosity, we filled and delivered 252 boxes. I don't know what next year's goal will be, but I know this....we serve a big God, and with his love and guidance, no goal is too big.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a glorious New Year.

Scott Spencer & Joan Reynolds

2017 WEDNESDAY NIGHT

FELLOWSHIP MEALS

Please consider preparing and serving a meal for a WNF. There is a church budget for this ministry and menus can be suggested to help guide you. So join together with your friends, family or small group to sign up for the January meals. Contact Ruth Dulaney at 309-738-6151 with questions or assistance.



Leftover Dishes

There are many leftover dishes that need to be retrieved by their owners. They are located on the bakers rack in the Fellowship Café area. Check to see if one is yours!



C.I.A. (Caring Individual Adults)

Luncheon Update

by Joanne Harris

The next meeting of CIA- aimed at senior citizens who often find themselves eating alone- will be on Sunday, January 22, 2017 at 11:30AM- after the holidays.

Need a ride to church?

Contact Greg Cobert at 309-737-5621, or the office at 309-582-2169 to make arrangements to be picked up.



All-Church Christmas Caroling

On Sunday, Dec. 18th at 2PM, we will have our annual All-Church Christmas Caroling event. Every year, we gather at the church and head out to spread a bit of Christmas cheer to folks in our church who are no longer able to make it on Sundays. We will carpool to Brookstone and Genesis Senior Living. Mark your calendar and plan on being a part of this great event! This is a wonderfully simple, inexpensive way to let other people see the love of Christ through you at Christmas. Join us as we carol for Christ!



January- a Season of Prayer and Fasting

A great thing will happen in January! On Sunday, January 1st, we will begin a 2-week period of prayer and fasting. Everybody in the church will be encouraged to participate as God leads you.

That time of prayer and fasting will be brought to a close in a powerful way. From 5PM, Friday January 13th through 5PM Saturday, January 14th, we will host our 5th annual 24-Hour Prayer Vigil. You will be given the opportunity to sign up to lead and/or attend one or more hours of prayer. The hours will rotate back and forth between the sanctuary and the chapel. Communion will be available each hour.

Then, on Sunday, January 15th, we will celebrate Commitment Sunday. Late this month, each household will receive a packet about committing our time, talent and tithes to God. And on Commitment Sunday, at all three services, we will all have the opportunity to bring our Commitment Card and place it on the altar. Please keep this powerful and important time in the life of our congregation in your prayers!

THANK YOU!

I want to thank all the wonderful cooks, and all who helped in any way, for the wonderful Golden Age Lunch. It means a lot to this "Golden Ager".

Audrey Anderson

UMW Fellowship Event

On Tuesday, Dec 13, 6-8PM, the UMW Fellowship group will meet to put together a basket for a needy family. Donations of paper products, canned goods, and Christmas wrapping supplies would be appreciated. Come and help prepare to bless a family at Christmas!



Special Observances in December

Bet you didn't know that December is Hi Neighbor Month! What about Read a New Book Month? Safe Toy Month? Write to a Friend Month? Bingo Month? In addition, here are some special days in December: The 1st- Eat a Red Apple Day, the 2nd- National Fritters Day, the 3rd- Roof over Your Head Day, the 4th- Wear Brown Shoes Day, the 5th- Bathtub Party Day, the 6th- Put on your own Shoes Day, the 7th - Pearl Harbor Day, the 8th- Brownie Day, the 9th- Pastry Day, the 10th- Human Rights Day, the 11th- Noodle Ring Day, the 12th- Ding-a-Ling Day, the 13th- Violin Day, the 14th- Bouillabaisse Day, the 15th - Lemon Cupcake Day, the 16th- Go Caroling Day (see accompanying article), the 17th- Maple Syrup Day, the 18th- Bake Cookies Day, the 19th- Look for an Evergreen Day, the 20th- Chocolate Covered Anything Day, the 21st- Look on the Bright Side Day, the 22nd- Date Nut Bread Day, the 23rd- Festivus (for the rest of us!) Day, the 24th- Egg Nog Day, the 25th- The Birthday of Christ, the 26th- Boxing Day, the 27th- Make Cut-Out Snowflakes Day, the 28th- Card Playing Day, the 29th- Pepper Pot Day, the 30st- National Bicarbonate of Soda Day, the 31st- New Year's Eve .

**PRAYER WALK
THROUGH THE
CHURCH EVERY
SUNDAY MORNING
AT 7AM.**



WORSHIP TIMES:
**Sundays 8AM,
9:15AM, & 10:30AM**
**Sunday School
9:15AM**

THE CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Not once, not twice but **THREE** times on Sunday, December 11th, our Chancel Choir will present their Christmas Cantata- Night of the Father's Love. At 8AM, 10:30AM and 6PM, they will lift their voices as they use their gifts to sing praise to God. **The 9:15 Rock and Worship service will happen as always.** Here's a marvelous idea- attend one of the morning services to enjoy this beautiful cantata. Then, come back at 6PM and bring someone with you who wouldn't otherwise come. It is a safe, low-risk opportunity to invite someone to come to church with you!

Wednesday Night Fellowship Is Going GREAT!

The last night of Wednesday Night Fellowship before Christmas will be Wednesday, December 14th. All of the Wednesday Night activities will start back up on Wednesday, January 4th. If you or your group would be willing to provide a Wednesday Night Fellowship meal, please contact Ruth Dulaney (309-738-6151 or ruthdulaney@gmail.com) We would love to have you for dinner...and more!

UNITED METHODIST MEN'S SOUP LUNCHEON

On Sunday, December 11th at 11:30AM, the United Methodist Men are hosting their annual Christmas Soup Luncheon. GREAT food will be offered- and ALL are welcome! Please come for the Christmas Cantata and then stay for a great lunch and great fellowship! What a GREAT way to get into the holiday spirit!



FINANCIAL MATTERS (WEEKLY NEED \$6,082)

Date	11/06/2016	11/13/2016	11/20/2016	11/27/2016
Attendance	285	247	256	296
Receipts				
(Toward Budget)	\$8,384.00	\$4,033.00	\$5,677.00	\$3,764.00

