CENTRAL UMC

The Central Connection

-Messages and Opportunities-

December, 2011

Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us". Matthew 1:23

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This season, I would like to share a reading about Christmas from "A Room Called Remember" by Frederick Buechner.

Christmas is not just . . . Scrooge waking up the next morning a changed man. It is not just the spirit of giving abroad in the land with a white beard and reindeer. It is not just the most famous birthday of them all and not just the annual reaffirmation of Peace on Earth that it is often reduced to, so that people of many faiths or no faith can exchange Christmas cards without a qualm. On the contrary, if you do not hear in the message of Christmas something that must strike some as blasphemy and others as sheer fantasy, the chances are you have not heard the message for what it is. Emmanuel is the message in a nutshell, which is Hebrew for "God with us."

Who is this God and how is he with us? "The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity" is the answer to the first [question].

The One who is with us is the One whom none can look upon because the space-and-time human mind can no more comprehend fully the spaceless, timeless Reality of the One than the eyes of the blind can comprehend light.

……..the claim that Christianity makes for Christmas is that at a particular time and place God came to be with us Himself. When Quirinius was governor of Syria, in a town called Bethlehem, a child was born, who beyond the power of anyone to account for, was the high and lofty One made low and helpless. The One who inhabits eternity comes to dwell in time. The One whom none can look upon and live, is delivered in a stable under the soft, indifferent gaze of cattle. The Father of all mercies puts himself at our mercy.

The child is born, and history itself falls in two . . . "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Emmanuel, "God with us" . . . may yet be born again even in us.

I pray that you will let the full and amazing meaning of "God with us" inhabit your imaginations and lives this year. As Mary did, let us ponder these things in our hearts.

Pastor Stephanie

United Methodist Women's Initiatives

PURPOSE OF UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose PURPOSE is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

The PURPOSE and program of the United Methodist Women has evolved out of a history of more than a century of women whose primary concern has been mission. The total program is extensive and encompasses a broad range of activities, concerns, issues, challenges and opportunities.

United Methodist Women strives to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ- to do acts of love, justice, mercy and faith, and to serve one another on an equal basis. A community emerges through worship, sharing, praying, studying, working and serving.

"God's authority sends the church into mission (John 17-18). God's power sustains the church in mission (Luke 24:49). God's revelation in Jesus Christ defines the church in mission."

The United Methodist Women explores ways to meet the needs of the members in our 140 year-old organization with 800,000 members.

The UMW members strive through Bible Studies, retreats and inspirational events to know God, and experience freedom through Jesus Christ. We each seek to find our own way to walk with God and search within ourselves for spiritual growth and understanding. Our desire to know and serve God is only a shadow of God's love and desire to know us, and use us in service to others.

We are among the many messengers who have gone through the nations "to bring good news to the poor--proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free; and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19).

Through Leadership Training Developments, our organization creates a creative and supportive community by directing its members in a clear and understandable way to accomplish our goals and fulfill our PURPOSE. Our leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge and skills. Leadership Development is provided to women of all racial, ethnic, language and economic groups. The opportunity to realize their full potential and to participate in the life of the church and society are acquired through continual work, study, and sharing of talents, gifts and graces. Leadership development programs and training are offered to teen and college/university women of different language groups.

The United Methodist Church's structural connect system, ecumenical connections, and solidarity with groups that work with women, children and youth in the global community have enlarged greatly the United Methodist Women's creative and supportive community.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures bear witness to a mission which begins with God, belongs to God, and will be fulfilled by God at the end of time. Mission is the activity of the triune God. By the authority of the God of justice mercy and peace the risen Jesus sends the church into mission partnership with God. (Matt. 28:18-20)

God's authority sends the church into mission (John 17-18). God's power sustains the church in mission (Luke 24:49). God's revelation in Jesus Christ defines the church in mission." From: Partnership in God's Mission Theology of Mission Statement, General Board of Global Ministries, quoted in the Women's Division Policy Statement "Education for Mission." We expand our concept of mission by working diligently on:

1. Mission Education-
2. Social Action/Advocacy
3. National Ministries
4. International Ministries
5. Funding Mission

Mission programs and projects are possible because of individual women's gifts to Mission Giving. Mission Giving allows United Methodist Women to respond where the need is the greatest and to work in partnership with organizations doing similar work.

Luz de Tablan- UMW President

MY CHRISTMAS OFFERING

"JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

This is the season to celebrate the birth of Christ, Our LORD. During this time most of us are busy making or buying gifts which are intended to demonstrate our love for one another.

As Christians, we have an obligation to express our love for Jesus and the Church He created. One way for us to do this is to give a special offering to GOD, demonstrating our love for Him and the many blessings He has given us.

Again this year Central Church is providing you a giving opportunity through our annual Christmas Offering.

The offering will be used to pay any outstanding bills due, with the excess contributions going to Church World Service.

Please take some time in prayer to consider what you can give to help our Church family and our world community during these difficult times. Please respond generously to this Christmas Offering.

-Committee on Finance

Jim Clemmer, Treasurer

"Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due and only suffer want."

Proverbs 11:24

“One Starry Night”

Presented by our children immediately following 10:45 AM Worship

Sunday, December 11

Covered Dish Luncheon

to follow the children's program in the Fellowship Hall *Please bring two* (2) *of your favorite dishes to share. Meat, Bread and Beverages will be provided.*

Family and Friends are WELCOME!

Lectionary Readings D

December

Sunday– 4th	Sunday-11th	Sunday-18th	Sunday-25th
Isaiah 40:1-11	Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11	2 Samuel 7:1-11,16	Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 85:1-2,8-13	Psalm 126	Luke 1: 47-55	Psalm 98
2 Peter 3:8-15a	1 Thess. 5:16-24	Romans 16:25-27	Hebrews 1: 1-4 (5-12)
Mark 1:1-8	John 1: 6-8, 19-28	Luke 1:26-38	John 1:1-14

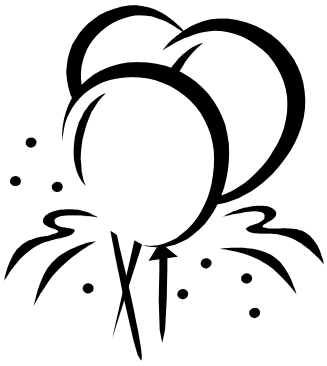
Giving Opportunities This Christmas

- ⇒ Salvation Army Bell Ringing- December 3- Staunton Wal-Mart
- ⇒ Christmas Mitten Tree- Placed in the gathering room- a collection of scarves, mittens, socks etc…for the area's needy families.
- ⇒ Christmas Offering here at Central

In Ministry

General Ministers…….301
Pastor…….....Stephanie M. Sault
Minister of Music/organist….....Sherry von Oeyen
Church Secretary……..Dana F. Wade
Child's Play Director……Jo Ann Black
Custodian…….....Janet Nuckoles
Retired Missionary Professor……...Hunter P. Mabry
Retired Pastor……..David D. Reed
Professor MBC……\..Kenneth A. Beals
District Superintendent……...D. Michael Houff
Resident Bishop……..……Charlene Payne Kammerer

December Birthdays



2 Baldwin Jennings

3 William Buchman, James Creger, Kenneth Hupman,

4 Beverly Coltrane

6 Deborah Reed, Ronald Keller

10 Vashti Clemmer

13 Eleanor Andrews, Debbie Harris

14 Randy Lindamood

15 Amelia Coltrane, Kathy Masters

18 Jo Ann Black

21 Fred Fountaine

22 Mary Lou Perry

23 Betty Wade

25 Helen Landes

26 Alma Creger, Jane Hanger, Ed Pickett

31 Russell Fitzgerald, Thomas Mitchell, Mark Rodgers

May God Bless Your Special Day with Joy and Love!!!

Please contact the church office if your name is not on the list and should be (or vice versa) *so that we may correct our records.

Single Mingle

Sunday, December 4

Lunch Following Worship

(Mill Street Grill)

All single adults are invited to join the group for a meal with great conversation, and laughter. Invite a friend for

Song Corner

My Hope Is In You

Aaron Shust

I meet with you and my soul sings out, as Your Word throws doubt far away. I sing to You and my heart cries holy, Hallelujah! Father, You're near. My Hope is in You Lord all the day long. I won't be shaken by drought or storm. The peace that passes understanding is my song, and I sing...My hope is in You alone. I wait for You and my soul finds rest, in my selfishness You show me grace. I worship You and my heart cries Glory– Hallelujah! Father You're here. My Hope is in You, Lord all the day long. I won't be shaken by drought or storm. The peace that passes understanding is my song, and I sing...My hope is in You alone. I will wait on You, You are my refuge. My hope is in You Lord. YOU ALONE!

Watch Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?

One of the great strengths of Central UMC is the warm welcome extended to newcomers and strangers. When we first began attending Central, we were made to feel immediately at home. Your warmth and continuing friendship has meant much to us. We have enjoyed being a part of this congregation. We are grateful for every kindness extended to us. And we are especially thankful for the Christian witness that you, its members, seek to make, and for the support that you extended during our time of service as missionaries in India.

The writer of Ecclesiastes has wisely observed, "For everything there is a season." So, just as there has been a time for coming, there is also a time for leaving. In view of increased limitations due to health issues, we will be moving to the United Methodist Retirement Home in Roanoke later this month. While we look forward to our new home (in a small apartment!), we are sad to be leaving Central. We regret that we have not been able to come to know more fully those of you whom we now know in part, and have not been able to get know others of you. And one of our deepest regrets is that we have not been able to engage in ministry among you, and with you in the world, as much as we would like. But we hope our paths will continue to cross, and that there will be opportunities for deepening our fellowship and common ministry.

THANK YOU!

We are aware of the concern many of you have about the future of Central. The Wisconsin Conference Director of Connectional Ministries recently noted that studies show that evangelism programs, membership drives, stewardship programs, Seven Habits, 12 Steps, even Disciple Bible Study have not been effective in dealing with membership and attendance growth. In this connection, we would like to share with you brief stories about four churches.

The first is a tale of two churches in another conference. The churches are just eight miles apart. Both experienced membership declines over the years as older people died or moved away, no new young families joined, giving decreased, and each congregation supplemented their finances through fund raising dinners. In 2007 the average attendance at the two congregations was 67 and 63.

Congregation A looked to the pastor and annual conference for assistance and direction, and wanted to attract young families and grow the church.

Congregation B recognized that it had little to attract new people, and that it was not doing anything proactive to reach out. A core group of 21 made a commitment to invite at least one friend, neighbor, family member or colleague to a small group, a work project, a fellowship event, or worship. Now, four years later, congregation A has an average worship attendance of 41 and is on the verge of closure.

Congregation B has an average attendance of 121 and is beginning a capital campaign to renovate and expand.

Congregations C and D are in the Virginia Conference. Congregation C was once a thriving congregation in a busy urban neighborhood. But the neighborhood went through a period of change, older members died or moved away, and worship attendance dwindled from an average of 195 in 1970 to only 49 in 2000.

But a faithful core believed God was calling them to ministry in their neighborhood. They felt a need to become more proactive. They began to learn more about their surrounding neighborhood, the people living there, and their needs. Outreach programs to underserved children and youth were started. Regular events were held to help meet the needs of these children and young people. The church facilities were made available for their use, and children often brought their single moms and parents along. Average worship attendance has gradually increased, and this Easter the congregation raised $25,000 for mission.

Congregation D consists of a three-point charge. Five years ago attendance on a good Sunday was 17, 15, and 12. Little was happening and the question became, "Do we just wait to die, or do we try to turn things around?" One Sunday, in the smallest church, the women became inspired by the story of Mary and Martha (Lk 10:36-41). They recognized that while Mary had chosen the better part, the church still needed its Martha's – women of faith who were not afraid to get their hands dirty to meet the needs of others.

They started to called themselves "The Martha's" and began to do what they knew how to do. They took meals to persons in the community who were ill (not just church members). They started a card ministry to those who were sick or down on their luck. They began to give money to those in the community who needed help. They started fund raisers and gave all the money away to those in the community who needed it. Then they got into mission trips – helping people get housing, paying medical bills, buying groceries.

Soon things were changing. Worship attendance increased. Only now the congregation included different kinds of people – people of color, people with tattoos and earrings, people who had no clue who Jesus is, people they had been told would never attend any church. Soon members of the other two churches saw what was happening, and in their own way started doing the same thing. Now, five years later, there are visitors every Sunday, and all three churches have tripled or bettered their weekly attendance.

Over the history of Methodism, two keys of evangelism have remained constant: Personal invitation and sacrificial service to others are the keys to growth. The pastor is, of course, the formal leader. But pastors come and go while congregations like Central remain as the 'family of God' witnessing in the places where they are located. As Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, noted in his address to the Board in September:

The solution to membership decline in the United Methodist Church, and other mainline denominations for that matter, will be found in the local church. That is where personal relationships are formed that lay the foundation for ministries that make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Jesus knew that. He personally invited each of his disciples to join him to transform the world.

We must do likewise. Extending our hands in invitation offering the abundant life promised by Jesus Christ is the real resolution we need to make.

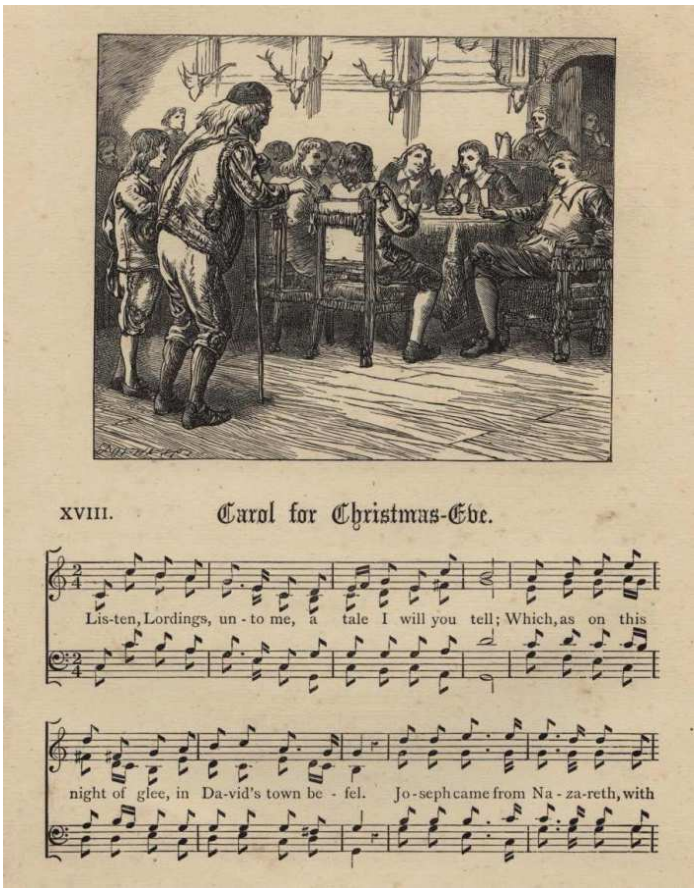
May grace and peace abound among you always,

--- Hunter and Esther Mabry

Our contact information after January 1st will be: 1051 Old Country Club Road NW, Apt. 1, Roanoke, VA 24017-2961; Esther: 540-448-3656; egama34@gmail.com; Hunter: 540-241-1266; hmabry@gmail.com

Music Notes From Your Director

Tis the season to be singing Christmas carols! We might consider the first Christmas carol/hymn to be what the angels sang in Luke 2:14---"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased." Hundreds of years later in 1734, Charles Wesley penned the words, "Hark, the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled…." And in an 18th century French carol, we sing, "Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains. Gloria in Excelsis Deo."



"Carols" have been sung or played for centuries, actually originating from dance. They celebrated many seasons, sacred and secular. It wasn't until around the 15th century that carols began to appear in Christianity.

Of course, Christians have been singing hymns and songs since the early church began, gathering to worship God through Jesus Christ. Many scriptures in the Old Testament were sung as hymns. One very familiar hymn that we sing during Advent is "O Come, O come, Emmanuel." The text was written in the 9th century. Another beautiful Christmas hymn "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" dates from the 15th century.

"Carols" were songs with a religious tendency and were simple and popular, often jolly. There was a particular style of writing with words and music that prevailed through several centuries. Around the 15th century, carols appeared more and more in Christian events. Due to the increased prominence of populist plays and the display of the "crib" (the origin of the nativity Scene created by St. Francis of Assisi), people were thinking more vividly of the many Bible stories of Jesus' birth. The carols , often written in the vernacular, with very singable tunes, took on the air of minstrel and folk poetry. Refrains were added and the meter was easier to sing. A very familiar example is " Good Christian friends rejoice with heart and soul and voice…." (#224 in our hymnal).

Today we have a treasure of Christmas carols and songs and hymns from man backgrounds that we can joyfully sing. Let us rejoice in the great gift we've been given in the birth of our Lord and King Jesus Christ. Glory be to God in the highest!

Sherry von Oeyen

Music Director

GABRIEL'S MESSAGE

Answers on: pg. 64

God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth with a message for a young girl named Mary. Mark out all the X's, Q's, Z's and K's. What was the message the angel delivered?

Q	Z	K	Q	X	Y	Z	K	X
X	Q	Z	W	K	X	O	Q	Z
Z	X	H	Q	I	Q	X	U	X
X	K	Q	A	Z	L	Q	Z	K
B	Q	Z	K	V	K	L	K	Z
W	A	Q	Z	K	E	K	X	K
H	I	B	X	Z	K	Q	X	Q
K	I	L	Y	K	Q	K	A	X
J	Q	M	L	K	Z	X	K	Z
K	E	X	Q	N	Y	Q	Z	X
Z	Z	S	K	Q	A	O	K	Q
X	X	Q	U	K	Z	M	U	X
Z	X	K	Q	S	K	Z	E	Q

LUKE 1:26-38

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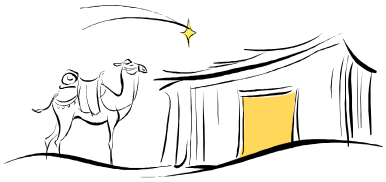

MERRY CHRISTMAS

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Isaiah 9:6

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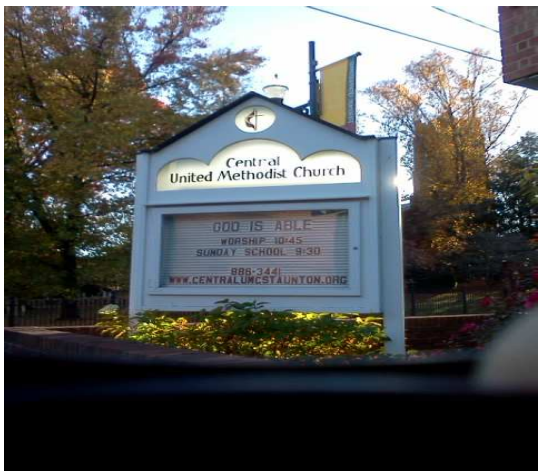
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