



The Ambassador

Dec 2021-Jan 2022

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From the Pastor

Dialing Down

Christmas. It's as if we've boarded the runaway train of our own increasingly higher expectations; no matter what, we simply must have a truly Merry Christmas. And when we finally get to this special day, more often than we might admit, there's some disappointment that it's not all we'd hoped. We might even be relieved it's over.

I don't consider it souring on Christmas to admit this. In fact, I suggest we have some sympathy for the Grinch, and also Mister Scrooge. We don't get a whole lot of background on these two, but it sure seems as if they've been hurt by Christmas somehow. At some point their expectations were dashed and they now they feel betrayed by the merriment forced upon them.

Haven't we all felt that in some small way?

Here's a thought: What if we dialed down our expectations for this holiday? What if we made a concerted effort to resist what our culture demands we do, and most especially, feel? This might actually make for a more faithful approach to the festivities. The beginning of Jesus' earthly life is indeed cause for celebration, but it's not like he's fulfilled his purpose just by being born. You could say he completes his task on Easter morning, but the Bible teaches us that there is still quite a way for him to go in saving our world, and since we are journeying with him, quite a ways for us to go as well.

So what should Christmas be for us now? It might help to think of it as a point along the path, a place where we can stop for a moment and reflect and refresh, like the slower scenic route we might choose for a few miles when taking a long trip. Maybe there's a picnic table where we can look out over some natural wonder, a nice moment, but not the destination we're ultimately bound for. Such a conceptualization of Christmas could help those among us who are truly dread-

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Contact Us

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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

In Person & Online
Bible Studies
@ 10 am Wednesdays and
@ 6 pm Thursdays

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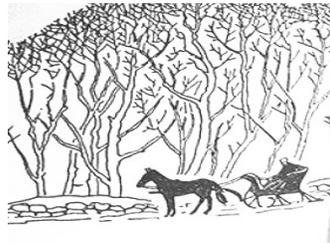
ing this season, either because of recent losses or losses so great the pain has yet to abate. And I really don't think it diminishes the birth of Christ to look at it this way. I suspect lowering the volume would actually make it more meaningful.

One of the few poems Americans have learned by heart is by Robert Frost. It's a bit somber, I know, but also beautiful. It invites us to take a moment to reflect, and then offers encouragement to move onward. It feels like a Christmas poem.

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year*



*He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep*

Peace, John Wagner



“From Darkness to Light” — Advent /Christmas 2021

- Sunday, November 28:** **First Sunday of Advent, “Hope”**
Sermon: “Fear and Hope”
- Sunday, December 5:** **Second Sunday of Advent, “Peace”**
Sermon: “The Way of Peace”
Guest Preacher, Rev. Patricia Wagner
The Messiah, 3 p.m. at Spring Hill Baptist Church
- Saturday, December 11:** **Christmas Pageant Filming, 11 a.m.**
UMW Christmas Tea, 2 p.m., Weatherwax Commons
- Sunday, December 12:** **Third Sunday of Advent, “Joy”**
Sermon: “Joy for All People”
- Sunday, December 19:** **Fourth Sunday of Advent, “Love”**
Sermon: “A Christmas Play by our Children”
- Friday, December 24:** **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7:30 p.m.**
- Sunday, December 26:** **First Sunday of Christmas**
Sermon: “Christmas Reflections”

Music and Worship Notes *by Mary Ellen Clinard*



From Darkness Into Light

Moving from darkness into light is the theme chosen by Rev. Wagner this year for Advent. This simple phrase, "darkness into light", can be symbolic of so many elements of life. It could be as simple as the darkness making it more difficult to get things done, and the daytime is when we can best get our daily tasks accomplished. It could be related to the symbolism of "being in the dark" (not understanding something), and upon understanding it "comes to light". In the Scripture there are 13 different references of "darkness to light", many relating to the state of humanity before Christ (darkness) and after Christ (light). In our liturgy for Advent, we wait in the darkness and prepare for the light. It's appropriate for this time of year as we live through these winter months where it's dark at 5 p.m. but we know that days of longer daylight will soon come.

Many of the choir anthems for Advent quote scripture passages from Isaiah in the Old Testament that urge us to prepare, to be comforted



in these dark times, to know that a light will come, and that those who walk in darkness will see the light.

The great oratorio "Messiah" has made these passages familiar to us and these anthems have reimagined those same scriptures in a new way. Our last anthem for December will be "You Are the Light", making the proclamation that Jesus indeed IS the light who has come to us. The parting words in this anthem are:

*You are the light, the light for our darkness,
You are peace, peace in our hearts,
You are love, the love for all people.
You are the light. Yes, you are the light!
You bring peace, you bring love, and joy!*

My prayer is that as we prepare our homes and make our plans for Christmas, we also take the time to prepare hearts to receive the light and love of Christ this season.

**FREE Concerts at
First UMC at Noon**

2021 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

DECEMBER 3 | Harps of Grace

Capture a moment of peaceful reflection to prepare yourself for all those holiday events by listening to a sanctuary full of harps! Make this your official start to the Christmas Season.

No refreshments will be served but concert-goers are welcome to bring a lunch and eat during the concert. Masks are encouraged but not required.

This concert series would not be possible without the support of the Middletown Community Foundation, the Barnitz Fund, Miriam Knoll Foundation, the Middletown Symphony Legacy Fund, and the congregation of First United Methodist Church in Middletown. Thank you for your sup-



Christ Our Life — Service Our Lifestyle

FUMC Kids!— We Need Your Help!

One of the highlights of the Christmas season at FUMC is watching as our children reenact the first Christmas and the events leading up to it; this year we look forward to continuing that tradition. We have the costumes, the props, the sheep, new inns...now all we need is you--the actors!



Last year we filmed each child individually; this year we'll be filming by scene or small groups like it's done in Hollywood. If you've ever acted in one of our pageants before you know how much fun it can be! We have parts available

for all ages and you don't have to read lines unless you want to. There are no extra rehearsals and most scenes can be filmed in half an hour.

The day of filming is **Saturday, December 11**. The time depends on which part you'll be playing, but it will be between **11 a.m.—2 p.m.**

If you have a question or are ready to choose a part please contact Linda Schmitt at 513-423-4629. There are parts for everyone but certain roles/times fill up early so don't delay! Happy Advent, and we'll see you in Bethlehem!

Donate a Toy for a Child

Along with other churches and service organizations, we are partnering with Feed the Hungry (Dream Center) to provide toys for children this Christmas. If you would like to donate a toy, please leave it unwrapped in the box we will have set up in the Commons beginning November 28. Please bring all donations by December 12 for pick up by volunteers.

Thanks For Your Support!

The UMW takes this opportunity to thank the FUMC congregation for supporting us by purchasing nuts, porch pots and Berns gift cards. Without you, we could not begin to raise the funds that help us meet our in-house and local missions goals! THANK YOU!

UMW Selling Recycled Treasures

The United Methodist Women will be selling some recycled beauties including Haviland and Bone china and decorative glassware for your cookies, sandwiches, cupcakes, jewelry or keys. These will be on display in the Commons during Advent, so come and find a marvelous Christmas gift for some lucky someone. Proceeds benefit local missions and in house missions. The UMW appreciates your support.

Holiday CareNotes Available

The FUMC family has experienced many losses

since the pandemic started and these losses are particularly difficult to deal with during the holiday season. Some "CareNotes" that deal with loss and the holiday season have been placed in the display rack outside the nursery. Hopefully they will be helpful to you and your families. Thank you!

Congregational Care Ministry

College/Military Gift Cards

College student/military gift cards will be mailed again on approximately Feb 14. Gift cards are for children and grandchildren of the congregation. Please contact the church office with any address changes or additions to our list.

UMW Christmas Tea

The United Methodist Women are hosting a Christmas Tea on **Saturday, Dec. 11** at 2 p.m. in the Commons. We will be recognizing UMW members for their service and enjoying some fellowship with each other. All are invited.

FUMC Has New Office Manager

Beginning January 1, Pam Fugett will become FUMC's Office Manager, replacing JoAnn Wagner, who is retiring December 31. Please join the staff in welcoming Pam and likewise, thanking JoAnn for all her service these last several years.

Mission Moment

An update from Dr. Les and Debbie Dornon, missionaries to Nepal working in the Tansen Hospital

Understanding the Bunnies

A couple of months ago, I shared a story of a little bunny whose leg was injured, and Les helped to bind it up to help it heal. Happily, that little bunny soon was hopping around on three legs at about the same speed as its siblings. In late October, we had three new families arrive all together in Tansen. They have come from Sweden to serve at the hospital, and they brought along eight children! We have been very happy to welcome them to our missionary team – they have more than doubled our size. The school has gone from one child to six. (Music class is more fun now!) All of the children have fallen in love with the three little bunnies and were promised that each family could take one home with them.

One of the little girls has a problem with her back which inhibits her ability to walk and run



as easily as the other children. Her mother told me that when they were looking at the bunnies, she said, "I really want the one who is missing a foot. I understand how life is harder for that little bunny and I want to care for him."

I was so touched by this – and thought it was a perfect story to share as we enter the season of advent. Jesus became human for us – and now he can truly understand our hardships and can take care of us.

We pray for you all that you get a fresh awareness of the great love that Jesus has for us. We wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Thanks for your prayers and support.

Love, देबी (Debbie) and लेस (Les)

Want more stories and photos? Check out our blog at dornonnepalmission.wordpress.com.



Join the #stillinmission Series

As the final 2021 episode of the #stillinmission series, missionaries from around the world will host a virtual Christmas worship service on **Thursday, Dec. 9 at 9 a.m. EST**. Debbie and Les will be a part of the service and invite you to worship alongside other missionaries in their unique contexts as they lead the service in prayer, song, and Scripture readings.

Registration is needed — for registration please visit https://umcmmission.org/still_in_mission/

December 2021

December Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10 am Son Reflections Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	2 6 pm Sunshine Bible Study	3 Noon First Friday Concert	4
5 COMMUNION 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship	6 8:30 am Breakfast Club	7 1 pm SPRC Mtg. 2 pm Pantry	8 10 am Son Reflections Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	9 10 am Investment Mtg. 6 pm Sunshine Bible Study	10 10 am UMW Board Mtg	11 11 am Christmas Play filming 2 pm UMW Christmas Tea
3 pm Messiah Performance at Spring Hill						
12 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship	13 8:30 am Breakfast Club	14 2 pm Pantry 6:30 pm Finance Mtg. 7 pm Council Mtg.	15 10 am Son Reflections Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	16 6 pm Sunshine Bible Study	17	18 9am Hope Circle @ Bob Evans
19 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Children's Christmas Play	20 8:30 Breakfast Club	21	22 10 am Son Reflections Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	23 6 pm Sunshine Bible Study	24 CHRISTMAS EVE OFFICE CLOSING 1 pm 7:30 pm Christmas Eve Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY
26 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship	27 8:30 am Breakfast Club	28 2 pm Pantry 6:30 pm Trustees Mtg	29 10 am Son Reflections Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	30 31 6 pm Sunshine Bible Study	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	

- 2 Elizabeth Evers
- 3 David Irwin
- 4 Tommy Dixon-Gordon
- 6 Jean Jordan
- 7 Allison Palmer, Fred Sander
- 8 Jared McDaniel
- 10 Henry Folgoso
- 11 Esther Johnson
- 16 Marcia Greenham,
- Cecil Jackson
- 17 John Wagner
- 20 C.M. Jenkins
- 22 Kathy Wright
- 24 Tom Buchert
- 25 Rick Lyke
- 26 Ashley Palmer, David Young, Cory Smarzynski
- 27 Johnny Nichols
- 28 Hayden Jenkins, Dee Markle
- 29 Nita Driscoll
- 30 Duane Gordon, Belinda Hausman



Happy Birthday!

January 2022

January Birthdays



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 NEW YEAR'S DAY
2 COMMUNION 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship	3 8:30 am Breakfast Club CHURCH OF-FICE CLOSED	4 2 pm Pantry	5 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	6 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study	7 NOON First-Fri-day	8
9 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship	10 8:30 am Breakfast Club	11 2 pm Pantry 6:30 pm SPRC	12 10: am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	13 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study	14 10 am UMW Board Mtg	15 9 am Hope Circle @ Bob Evans
16 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Human Relations Day	17 MILK BIRTHDAY 8:30 am Breakfast Club 7 pm Elizabeth Cir. OFFICE CLOSED	18 2 pm Pantry 6 pm Finance Mtg 7 pm Council Mtg	19 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	20 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study	21 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	2 28 Wilma Mucha 29 Judy Andrews 30 Shelby Grace Ruffledge, Carolyn Tucker 31 Dixie Davis, Ronald Jones
23 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	24 8:30 am Breakfast Club	25 2 pm Pantry 6:30 pm Trustees	26 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl	27 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study	28	29
30 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	31 8:30 am Breakfast Club					

- 9 Glenna Combs
- 10 Dave Kramer, Chris Urso
- 12 Bob Beagle
- 16 John Andrews
- 18 Jim Hogg
- 19 James Irwin, Eric Taylor
- 22 Pat Schaefer
- 24 Greg Caudill
- 25 James Thomas Irwin, Phyllis Loli
- 26 Alex Mills
- 28 Wilma Mucha
- 29 Judy Andrews
- 30 Shelby Grace Ruffledge, Carolyn Tucker
- 31 Dixie Davis, Ronald Jones

Happy Birthday!

2021 Poinsettia Order Form



NAME _____

PHONE (____) _____ EMAIL _____

All POINSETTIAS will be red with a traditional foil wrap. **ORDER DEADLINE: Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021**

Memory of:	Honor of:	Name flowers are for:	From: (How your name(s) will be listed)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

MUST PAY WHEN PLACING ORDER

____ Quantity of Arrangements @ \$15 each = \$_____ Total Due (check payable to FUMC; also accepting credit/debit)