



# The Ambassador

February 2022

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## From the Pastor

### Necessary Change

When I first started in ministry it was strongly recommended I read a popular book for pastors entitled, "The Change Agent." We were often told by higher-ups that we were sent to churches to change them, and make them less resistant to change. It almost seemed like it didn't matter what they were already doing.

Well ... here's what happened. I quickly found out two things:

1. Some things ought not be changed, and
2. People tend not to like changes, even when they are necessary. Often they hate change.

But then, as we all know, there are times when change is so necessary that the need for it bubbles up and becomes clear to everyone. We are living in such a time. The pandemic has taught us all about the need to adapt. We say, "I can't wait for things to get back to normal," and then take a breath and say, "but I expect some changes are here to stay."

Two changes are coming hard upon us here at church. The first is **"livestreaming."** This is the technical name for broadcasting our worship services via the internet so people can watch from home. I used to get irritated when my parishioners told me how much they've enjoyed a certain TV preacher, that they watch him even on Sunday morning instead of coming to church. But now I'm a TV preacher myself! I never would have imagined such a thing, but it had to be done. As poor a substitute as it is for actually sitting in a sanctuary, it's become not only necessary but expected. Even when the pandemic is no longer a major threat there will still be people who want to connect with

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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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their home congregation but who just can't make the trip. They rightfully expect we will do everything in our power to include them. And at this point we are broadcasting not only to the homebound but also people who have had to move far away. We now have viewers in other states and other countries. Of course, as you might guess, the technology behind livestreaming is complex, and we've had our stumbles. But our volunteers are quite dedicated and have an excellent record of working through those technical difficulties even at the very last minute, which can be pretty stressful. But we seek out professional advice when needed, purchase new equipment when needed. PLEASE BEAR WITH US AS WE MAKE THESE ADJUSTMENTS. I believe it's worth it.

The other change is also a necessary change, in my opinion. Most of you know by now we are bringing former student intern **Daniel Cardenas** and his new wife from their native Mexico to serve here in Middletown. Their arrival is tentatively scheduled for the end of February or early March. Why are we doing this? At this point it looks very likely that both Henry Folgoso and I are going to be leaving you soon. Henry because he has graduated from seminary (hallelujah!) and is ready to have his own church, me because it's time to retire, perhaps even past time. I will be replaced by another pastor in our conference, but our Spanish speaking members need a pastor they know and can relate to, who will be there for them, build up that ministry, and build up children and youth ministry as well. The rest of the church, we English speakers, also need to have someone who can work with our children and youth. Daniel is really a great fit on all scores because he has a magnetic personality, is fully bilingual, already cares deeply about this congregation and its future, can play guitar and lead a youth group, and as a wonderful bonus, comes with his wife Anahi who is likewise a trained church worker and enthusiastic about this new adventure. We will send out an all-church letter when this is about to take place, informing you about what might be needed to welcome this young couple. You'll like them.

Friends, change is usually difficult, even necessary change is hard, but that doesn't mean it can't also be revitalizing. Followers of Jesus are supposed to find joy in change – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Peace, to you,

John Wagner

### **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.



# Music and Worship Notes *by Mary Ellen Clinard*

## The Big Move

Scrawled on an irregularly shaped piece of paper, maybe even on the flap of an old envelope, is a quote that I once heard at an Ohio River Valley District meeting. I thought it worthy enough to be added to the menagerie of meaningful quotes and scribbles taped to various places in my office where I can see them on a regular basis.

It reads:

*"A disciple is someone who has moved from being the RECIPIENT of the church's mission to being RESPONSIBLE for the church's mission."*

I have learned that this quote is from Jonathan Wright, a preacher from Kansas who came to the church as a man who had made some bad choices in his life and through faith, began to live a better life. He is now a preacher, speaker, and outreach expert.

So here at FUMC, how do we move from being just the receivers of what the church has to offer to being the ones actively creating and being engaged in the actual work of the church? How do we "plug in" to our church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?

Being responsible for the church's mission doesn't mean that a person has to be in charge of the mission in order to fulfill the statement above. It can be the myriad of things that make the mission of the church run smoothly and successfully. Serving on a committee, stuffing envelopes, weeding the flowerbeds, shopping for the Pantry, singing in the choir, teaching Children's Church, and working the equipment in the sound booth on Sundays, are all ways of being responsible for the church's mission.

Our scriptures in the last month have talked about the body of Christ, with its different parts all being needed and the variety of gifts that we all have. What are your gifts that would move you from being a recipient to being responsible for the missions at FUMC? What are some skills that you would like to learn in order to become responsible for the missions at FUMC? Perhaps someone in our congregation can teach you! Perhaps you would like to come by the church some time and just ask questions about some ways to get involved using your gifts and talents.

Most people who have made the move from recipient to responsible have found that their faith comes alive in this new work. Attending church becomes a more meaningful, deeper experience and, they find they are once again a recipient, but of a different kind—of new friendships, of becoming part of a small group community, and living a life of purpose for the Kingdom.

Consider the move to mission!

# News From the Pews



The picture above shows the 16 filled purses that were donated to the current residents at Hope House at Christmas. Thank you for your generosity!



Thanks to the volunteer painters who brightened up the Pantry with fresh paint and cheerful art!



These lucky gents found the Baby Jesus in their cake during our Rosca de Reyes celebration.

Row 1 (L-R): Tucker, Kavon, Cooper

Row 2: (L-R): Cory, Mike, Dan



## 2022 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

**FEBRUARY 4 | Mike “Elvis” Davis**

Be completely entertained by this First Friday favorite as Mike brings his popular tribute to the great Elvis Presley to our First Friday audience.

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 support!

### Women’s Bible Study Opportunity

A Women's Bible study, *Jesus and Women: In the First Century and Now*, will start **February 2 on Wednesday mornings at 10 – 11:45 AM in the chapel**. Nancy Heberling and Barb Balsmeyer will facilitate the 7 week session, using teaching videos and discussion to add to our understanding of what biblical authors and people featured in the Bible meant by what they *said* and *did*. Following in the footsteps of women who came face-face with Jesus will help us understand Jesus more deeply and grow in our own faith.

If you are not involved in Bible study, this is an invitation to join us. We look forward to learning with you. If you have questions, please contact Nancy or Barb. Please bring your Bible and a notebook. As with all our church activities, our meeting together will depend upon the Covid situation.

### SUCCESSFUL BLOOD DRIVE

Thank you for hosting a great blood drive. This blood drive is slowly growing and there were THREE first time donors! Listed below are the overall results.

- **15 people registered to give blood!**
- **13 were successful!**
- **3 first time donors! WOW!**
- **Over 39 lives will be positively impacted because of total donations!**

We are excited about partnering with you again on **Monday, March 21 at the Middletown Midpointe Library**.

Sandra Baur,  
Community Blood Center

# Mission Moment

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

Many of you know that Les is a runner - he goes out almost every morning to run around the mountain... I do not run - I walk 3 - 4 times a week up the 500 steps to the top of Srinagar "hill" and then along through the aging pine trees, down the rocky path and back to our home. A couple of other ladies often walk with me - we call ourselves the "Palpa Perambulators" on our WhatsApp group. (Palpa is the name of our district). This morning, I walked alone as the two other regular walkers (both doctors) were home isolating after testing positive for Covid. As I walked along the road overlooking the valley below us with its "White Lake" I prayed once again for an end to this pandemic. I wondered again what God is trying to teach me through it - and how He could be glorified in the midst of all this!

We are thankful that our current surge (which just started about 2 weeks ago) is not resulting in many seriously ill people or many deaths. In fact, most people currently in our isolation ward came to the hospital for other serious illnesses or for other treatments needed and found (to their surprise) that they tested positive for Covid. (All patients who are admitted to the hospital are tested.) The other day, we had 4 ladies arrive - all in active labor - and 3 tested positive for Covid! We actually had to send them down to the hospital down the road as we have only one private room in maternity, and couldn't have those ladies delivering among the non-Covid patients...

The hardest part of this current wave is that many hospital staff are falling sick (not seriously), testing positive, and home isolating - which is seriously cutting into our ability to continue to serve patients and offer services. I understand this is happening in the U.S., as well - and that the National Guard has been called in to help! This is another big difference between western countries and developing ones - in more wealthy nations there is a back up plan, and other people to call in to help in a crisis.

We pray for you - and thank you for your prayers for us. I sit here at my desk, in my coat, mittens, and extra socks - longing for the fireplace we used to have in Ohio.... The other morning, our indoor temp was registering at 53. I am thankful for my hot water bottle and warm blankets. It makes me think more of those who don't have a warm place to shelter in these cold days.

I was praying with a friend the other day - trying to think how to encourage another friend who is struggling with seemingly never-ending health troubles. Why was I born into a life of privilege? Why do others hurt so much? I pray in 2022 that I can, like Paul, learn to be content in whatever situation He chooses to send my way. Our love to you all!

Want more stories and photos? Check out our blog at  
[dornonnepalmission.wordpress.com](http://dornonnepalmission.wordpress.com).



# February 2022

## February Birthdays

- 1 Matthew Dixon
- Hannah Voyle
- 3 Kathy Lambert
- Sandy Mills
- 4 Beth Watson
- 5 Mark Frazer
- 6 Barbara Caudill
- 8 Anita McLaughlin
- 9 Mary Davis
- Lynda Goecke
- 10 John McDaniel
- 12 Emily Miller
- Kira Wills
- 16 Mary Ellen Clinard
- Daphne Murphy
- 17 Jennifer Irwin
- Phyllis Richmond
- 19 Bill Alderton
- 20 Marilyn Clark
- 21 Johnny Schmitt
- 22 Mark Mills
- 24 Joni Bachelor
- 26 Sylvie Gadness
- 28 Donna Burley

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> 2:00 Pantry	<b>2</b> 10:00 Son Reflections & Women's Bible Study 3 & 7 Choir Rhrs	<b>3</b> 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	<b>4</b> 12:00 First Friday Concert	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	<b>7</b> 8:30 Breakfast Club	<b>8</b> 11 Memorial s Mtg 1:00 SPRC 2:00 Pantry	<b>9</b> 10:00 Son Reflections & Women's Bible Study 3 & 7 Choir Rhrs	<b>10</b> 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	<b>11</b> 10:00 UMW Meeting	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	<b>14</b> VALENTINES DAY 8:30 Breakfast Club	<b>15</b> 2:00 Pantry 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:00 Council Mtg	<b>16</b> 10:00 Son Reflections & Women's Bible Study 3 & 7 Choir Rhrs	<b>17</b> 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	<b>18</b> AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	<b>19</b> 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans 9:00 Elizabeth Circle
<b>20</b> 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	<b>21</b> 8:30 Breakfast Club	<b>22</b> 2:00 Pantry 6:30 Trustees Mtg	<b>23</b> 10:00 Son Reflections & Women's Bible Study 3 & 7 Choir Rhrs	<b>24</b> 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	<b>28</b> 8:30 Breakfast Club					Dates to Remember in March: 2—Ash Wednesday 4 World Day of Prayer 27 UMCOR Sunday

 **first**  
church  
M I D D L E T O W N  
*a united methodist community*  
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