

# First United Methodist Church

## CHURCH HAPPENINGS

THANKFULL FOR...

DECEMBER 2014

**“The peace and the hope of Christ be with you.”**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**The Season of Advent 2**

**Thank you 3**

**Young Adults 3**

**Poinsettia Order Form 3**

**Looking Forward/ Missions 4**

**Celebrations! 4**

## *Pastor's Notes*

Blue Christmas. A song? Well, yes. And Elvis did it very well. Probably wore suede shoes to match the mood. Yet there is another meaning.

Blue Christmas, or Longest Night, is traditionally held on or around the night of longest darkness in our northern hemisphere, December 21. The choice of this date is important: the darkness reflects what for many of us is our true feeling of the season.

The whole world seems to be jingled and jollied to the max: stores blaring carols, TV showing all the classics like Frosty, Grinch and The Bishop's Wife, and everything from houses to cars to our pets are decked out in an explosion of tinsel and garland. So why am I feel sad. Why does the thought of putting up a tree seem overwhelming? How can twinkle lights bring on tears? Why do I become so creative at finding excuses to decline invitations from family, friends, co-workers and neighbors?

What has the year held since we last celebrated the holidays? Loss of or change in position at my job? Change in

where I live? Loss of someone I dearly love? End of a season in my life, such as graduation, becoming an empty nester or retirement? More time spent at the doctor? Significant change in a significant relationship? More difficulty seeing or hearing or being mobile? Loss of a beloved pet? Anticipation of not traveling to family, friends or that special warm spot this year? For some of us, we answer yes to one or more of such life events.

And there are some of us for which the holiday has deep memories. Maybe an anniversary of sorts. Good or not so good, such memories can trigger emotional detachment and rumination over or longing for what has been.

Finally, it is dark! A lot! Seasonal affective disorder is real!

Then there are we who don't have a clue why we feel as we do. But this year, or for some every holiday season, sends us into a dark corner in our heart.

Any or a combination of these challenge us and can make even worship uncomfortable. So that brings

us back to Blue Christmas. Blue because that is one way we describe how we feel. Also blue because it is the color of hope!

During worship on December 21 we will experience Blue Christmas. It's not a sad mournful service. Yet it is one where we openly acknowledge that many of us have a mix of emotions this time of year. Meditative readings. Invitation to light a candle. Offering of anointing with oil and prayers for healing. Accepting Christ's invitation to share his meal.

Not feeling jingle and jolly? Come! Know a family member, neighbor, friend, co-worker or fellow student for whom the holidays may be a struggle? Invite! Elvis will not be in the building. Yet I hope you and those you invite will be.

The peace and the hope of Christ be with you.

**Now and always./Pastor C**

## The Season of Advent: Anticipation and Hope

Based on an article by Dennis Bratcher

### The Meaning of "Advent"

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000+ year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power. That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's inbreaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future

consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

### The Spirit of Advent

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance!

It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth and justice and righteousness over His people and in His creation. It is that hope that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew, the reign of an Anointed One, a Messiah, who will bring peace and justice and righteousness to the world.

The Season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for sins similar to the Season of Lent. However, a different emphasis for the season of Advent has gradually unfolded. The season of Advent has come to be celebrated more in terms of expectation or anticipation. Yet, the anticipation of the Coming of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament and Judaism was not in connection with remembrance of sins. Rather, it was in the context of oppression and injustice, the longing for redemption, not from personal guilt and sin but from the systemic evil of the world expressed in evil empires and tyrants. It is in that sense that all creation groans for its redemption as we witness the evil that so dominates our world (Rom 8:18-25).

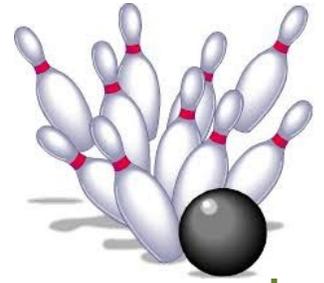
Advent is a time of preparation that is marked by prayer. While Lent is characterized by fasting and a spirit of penitence, Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers of submission, prayers for deliverance, prayers from those walking in darkness who are awaiting and anticipating a great light (Isa 9)!

**Come, O Come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel!**

THANKFULL FOR...

**Thank you** to Cindy and Phil Rudolph! Have you noticed the little boxes plugged in to some of the outlets in the hallways? At their expense of time and cost, Cindy and Phil 'mapped' the church so our WiFi signal can bounce up down, here there and hopefully everywhere! Such a gift! This adds to what we can offer to individuals, groups and business who use our facility. As Methodists, being better connected is a beautiful thing! Thanks again, Cindy and Phil!

# Young Adults



Bowling Day! All are welcome !

Sunday December 28th

Young Adults if you have ideas or suggestions for a youth group or Young Adults Group please let Chris know!

christopher.lubawski@hotmail.com



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS ORDER FORM - 2014

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

IN HONOR OF \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF \_\_\_\_\_

COLOR: RED \_\_\_\_\_ WHITE \_\_\_\_\_ PINK \_\_\_\_\_ Indicate number of plants per color.

**PLANTS ARE \$12.00 EACH** NUMBER OF PLANTS \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

DELIVER TO SHUT-INS \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** PICK-UP AFTER CHRISTMAS EVE, OR SUNDAY DECEMBER 28 SERVICE \_\_\_\_\_

**THE DEADLINE TO ORDER IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2014**

PAYMENT IS DUE WITH YOUR ORDER. PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF

## Looking Forward.....

**Wednesday December 24 at 7pm.** Christmas Eve worship of music, Table, Light and hope!

### Missions:

**BEDS Collection:** disposable razors and ankle length socks (men's and women's) for BEDS. This items are greatly needed by BEDS. There will be a collection box by the office to put those items in.

**Pillars Collection:** We will again be collecting hats, mittens and scarfs on the Christmas tree in the foyer and will donate those to Pillars.

**Sun. Dec 7, Sun. Dec 14, and Sun. Dec 21st** -we will collect a special offering to benefit Pillars with a portion going to BEDS for McDonald gift certificates.

### Food Pantry Item:

Canned Fruit & Vegetables



## Happy Anniversary!

12-28 Chuck & Carolyn Sparks

## December Birthdays !

12-02 Alex Lillquist

12-05 Nancy Bailey

12-06 Sara Bailey

12-11 Howard Graening

12-14 Janice Caliendo

12-14 Paul Caliendo

12-15 Nancy Benes

12-15 Sara Patterson

12-17 Romelle Marshal

12-19 Andrew Patterson

12-20 Cathy Gleason

12-23 Victoria Biery

# MERRY CHRISTMAS !

