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Life @1st Church

905 Glendale Avenue, South Charleston, WV 25303

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 12

December 2020

Rambling Thoughts of a Pastor by Pastor Paul

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair ..., we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way ..." **Charles Dickens**

If Dickens were describing society in 2020, he would probably take out all the positive attributes in his famous opening paragraph to *The Tale of Two Cities*. 2020 is a year that has dropped us to our knees and not all because of a virus but it does seem the virus has brought out the worst in us. I am so ready for 2021 to start and change to occur. It seems as though I said the same thing this time last year.

December of 2019 I was so excited for the New Year. My surgery was six months behind me, my energy was better than ever and plans were in place for a great adventure in 2020. There were babies to baptize; two families to join the church. Palm Sunday was going to be a very full service. Back Door, our new contemporary Sunday Evening Service, was launched in February to great response and attitudes. Momentum was moving in the right direction and people were excited.

Then came March and a new word, Covid 19, aka Coronavirus and the world stopped in the wake of a pandemic that threatened our survival. Covid did what the Devil had not been able to do in over 2000 years; the doors of the church closed to face-to-face worship services. At first we did nothing thinking this will be short lived and we would be back to normal in a couple of weeks so relax and wait. As the news continued to be released on the full fury of this pandemic I knew this was to be a long and difficult struggle which is still with us and growing stronger.

I decided that First Church had to take a Wesleyan approach in a 21st Century setting to get to our people. If the people could not come to the church then the church would go to the people via the internet and Facebook. And so began the journey with a new and strange learning curve to become technicians, producers, actors and all-around geeks. We started small and slow but we are steadily improving and growing. We now have 10 people on the Audio Visual Production Team and room for more. The church is providing Sunday Services, Bible Studies, Children's WOW and Sunday small groups by way of the internet. Church business is conducted through Zoom meetings, emails, texts and phone. We are finding ways to enhance our Christian experience every day and it is reinforcing our Discipleship commitment. It's not perfect yet but we are moving in that direction. John Wesley would be encouraged.

As I report to you this 2020 Charge Conference, I lament for the state of our nation, our brothers and sisters; I can say that I am tired physically, mentally and emotionally; but it is a good tired. I am excited as to how you have responded as a church and as Disciples of Christ. I am so looking forward to the next year as we continue this journey together.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Paul M. Helmick, OP



Memorial Gifts

Frances Neff Memorial Fund:

Dr. and Mrs. Alva Deardorff

Paul Smith Memorial Fund:

Dr. and Mrs. Alva Deardorff

First United Methodist wishes to thank all who have honored our loved ones with a donation to our church Memorial Fund.

Memorial gifts are often given at the time of a person's death instead of flowers. It is a way to say that the person was important and will be missed. But memorial gifts do not always have to come at a person's death. Some people also like to make memorial gifts on the anniversary of someone's death or at other times in remembrance of someone close.

Some gifts can be given to honor someone who is still alive. It is a celebration of one's life at an anniversary, birthday, or just to say thanks.

Donations can be mailed to the church advising if the donation is in memory of a deceased person or in honor of someone.



United
Methodist
Women
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

Peace, Love and Books December 2020

by Teresa Matheny

Wow! This year has been such a crazy year! Lucky for us it has given us plenty of time to read our United Methodist Women Reading Program books. So, finish up that last UMW Reading Program book you have been reading and turn in your Reading Program Reporting Form. Please turn in your form to Teresa Matheny by **Sunday, December 6th**. You may send it to me by mail or leave it in the United Methodist Women folder in the hallway beside Linda's office. I hope everyone has been reading and safely sharing your opinion of the books you have read with your circle members and friends to include them in the reading program as well. Our 2021 UMW Reading Program will begin January 1, 2021. Be on the lookout for new books and new Reading Program Reporting Forms for 2021. Thanks to all of you who have participated in 2020 and thanks in advance to all who will be participating in 2021. Remember to check the monthly newsletter for new book reviews.

“How are you, really?”
Tired or energetic?
Feeling connected or isolated?
Bored or overwhelmed?
Yearning for normalcy?

All laity of the West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church’s Midland South District are invited to join Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball and the Lay Leadership Team for a district zoom meeting as we ponder: “How are you, really?”

December 2
6:30 p.m. Eastern Time

(While all are welcome to participate, this Zoom meeting is focused on church lay persons rather than on the congregation’s pastor.)

What to expect . . .

- A message from Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball
- A greeting from your new Lay Leadership Team members including Conference Lay Leader Kristi Wilkerson, Associate Lay Leader Eva Hensley Faulkner, Lay Servant Ministry Coordinator Kim Matthews, Conference Director of Congregational Vitality Ken Willard, and Midland South District Lay Leader George Hohmann.
- Information regarding opportunities for lay persons to be involved
- Announcements from the district
- Ideas for outreach and mission activities
- An opportunity to ask questions

Please register for this online meeting here:

https://wvumc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_J054rViNQAGO0T1sf14ssg

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email and the link for the meeting. (And please feel free to invite church friends to join us, too!)

For those who cannot attend online, you can call into the meeting instead: (301) 715-8592.

If you would like to submit a question, please do so before the meeting if possible. Please email it to: Lay.Leader@wvumc.org

Those participating online can also submit questions to the panelists during the meeting.

Special note:

While we would prefer to meet in person, of course, as we normally would, we hope you will participate in this online Zoom meeting format as we respond to pandemic circumstances. We’ll meet safely by Zoom this time, we’ll continue to pray that we can resume our district gatherings in person again very soon, and we’ll celebrate mightily when we can be together, in person, again.

We look forward to sharing this time with Bishop Steiner Ball, our Conference Lay Leadership Team, and our district laity.

Questions may be directed to George Hohmann, Midland South District Lay Leader, by e-mail (g.hohmann48@gmail.com) or phone (304 419-1916).

Incarnation Bible Study lead by Pastor Paul

It is not too late to join us for the weekly bible study based on the Incarnation Bible Study by Adam Hamilton. It will be lead by Pastor Paul on Tuesday evening starting at 7:00 p.m. Five week series which started on November 17th and will end on December 8th. We will watch a short video (15 minutes) followed by open discussion (45 minutes). We will use the ZOOM platform which you can connect via internet as well as by phone. For more information, call the church office 304-744-3211.



Pastor Paul Helmick, Sara Hampton, Ed Altizer, Mike and Sandy (not pictured) Warwick, Jim and Cayle (not pictured) Snyder, Joyce French, Barbara and Charley Brown, Peggy King, Peggy Kourey and not pictured Barney and Becky Lilly.

December Prayer by David Biondi

Most gracious and loving Lord, with December upon us, we find ourselves in the season of the Christian year known as Advent, meaning that Christmas is almost upon us. During Advent we, as your followers, are called to make preparations in our hearts and in our lives to celebrate your Holy Birth. In addition to our need for spiritual preparation, we also have other preparations to attend to in order to enable Christmastime to be a special time for family, friends and loved ones.

This year, however, with the coronavirus pandemic raging on, we find things to be very different from what we have become accustomed to during the holiday season. Many of our familiar celebrations and festivities will either not be taking place or will have to be significantly modified so as to safeguard people from potentially spreading and/or contracting this dreaded disease. This is indeed sad, Lord, for we deeply love our holiday activities.

But, perhaps, there is a bit of a "silver lining" to all this, for it has afforded us an opportunity to step back from what is all too often the hectic, feverish pace of the holiday season so that we might delve more deeply into what the true meaning of Christmas is all about: God coming to us in human flesh for the sake of our sin and our salvation and to provide us with a holy example of how we have been called to live as his beloved children.

So, Lord, please inspire us to take the opportunity which these unusual times have provided so that, this year, we would reflect more profoundly upon your holy Incarnation than we have done previously -- to the end that the true meaning of Christmas will shine its Light upon us, enabling us to experience a genuine sense of happiness and joy so that we may be transformed more fully into the loving, caring people you would have us be.

This we pray in your most holy and blessed name. Amen.

HEART + HAND CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS 2020 by Teresa Matheny

FOOD INSECURITY – The state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. This term was first used in 1977.

We are running way behind in our food donations for Heart and Hand Christmas Food baskets this year. For your convenience, I will be in the church parking lot on the parsonage side EVERY MONDAY from 10am until noon. The last day to donate will be December 6.

In this strange and worrisome time of COVID-19 our church will still be preparing 60 baskets for the Heart + Hand Christmas Food Baskets this year. With job losses and shortened hours for some there is probably a greater need than ever before. These food baskets go to families in our neighborhood and community that need a little help during the holidays. Not only do we provide food items for a holiday meal, but we also try to include enough food to get families through the school Christmas Break. We want to help make the holiday time a little brighter for those in our own community – you can help by providing some of the items from our Heart + Hand Christmas Food Basket list. If you would rather contribute monetarily, of course you may do so. Make your check out to First United Methodist Church and write on the memo ‘Christmas Food Baskets.’

Jesus said, *“I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.” They asked “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and did not help you?” He answered, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”* Matthew 25:42-45

Items that can be donated are:

Breakfast Cereal	Cake Frosting	Mayonnaise – 32 oz.
Fruit Juice 46 oz. (like Juicy Juice)	Hamburger Helper	Mustard – 20 oz.
Peanut Butter 2 lb.	Applesauce – 15 oz.	Soup (canned)
Jelly 32 oz.	Cookies	Sugar
Spaghetti Pasta 2 lb.	Corn Muffin Mix	Tuna (canned)
Spaghetti Sauce 26 oz.	Crackers – 16 oz.	Vegetable Oil
Cake Mix	Flour – 5 lb.	
	Ketchup – 36 oz.	

For your convenience, there will be boxes in the Narthex as well as in the hallway to place donated food items.

As always, thank you for your participation in this worthy cause. Questions? Call Teresa Matheny 304 – 744 – 1903.



THE NUTS ARE IN!!



The United Methodist Women of First Church are once again selling fancy whole pecans. Cost is \$11/bag. If you prefer, you can stop by the church between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday-Wednesday and pick up a bag or two. We are almost sold out of our first order and have ordered additional cases.

Celebrations, Etc. at 518 D Street in South Charleston (owned and operated by our own Pat Burchett) is selling whole pecans, pecan pieces, salted almonds, walnuts, deluxe mixed nuts (with no peanuts), and chocolate covered pecans for the United Methodist Women of First Church. Stop by and stock up on some additional delicious treats and say hello to Pat. Cost for all will be \$11/bag.

Go nuts and help support the UMW of First Church and our local mission projects.

Prayer Request Changes Announced

A phone call list has been established for those that do not receive emails for prayer requests. Those on the list will receive a phone call on Thursday from the church advising prayer requests received during the week. If we have a death in the church or a serious situation for prayers, a phone call will be made immediately. No phone calls will be made if no prayer requests are received during the week. If you would like your name added to the phone call list, please call the church office (304-744-3211). Prayer requests will continue to be sent via email as they are received.

Prayer requests are to be sent to 1stumcsc@gmail.com or call (304-744-3211). To have your prayer concern mentioned during the upcoming Sunday service the request must be received by Wednesday. Prayer requests received after Wednesday will be read the following week. Prayer requests will be read for two weeks unless we are notified otherwise.

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

Telling Others about Jesus

At the birth of a child, most parents make numerous telephone calls to relatives and friends to tell them about the wonderful news. In addition to telephone calls, announcement cards are often sent. When Jesus was born, there were no telephones or mail service. However, God had a better method of announcing the birth of his Son. He used his angels:

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger' " (Luke 2:8-12).

God, in his sovereignty, did not choose the rulers of the time nor the wealthy to be among those who were the first to hear of Jesus' birth. Interestingly, he chose a group of people who, in many ways, were considered outcasts. Upon hearing the good news of the Christ Child, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see Jesus in the manger.



After seeing Jesus, the shepherds went out and *"spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child"* (Luke 2:17). God used these people to be his ambassadors. The people who heard the shepherds talk about Jesus were *"amazed at what the shepherds said to them"* (verse 18).

Like the shepherds, we are called to be faithful witnesses of Jesus and his love. Once we begin to comprehend his love for us, we will be compelled to share that love with others. In telling others, we reflect our gratitude for his love, grace, and mercy. God hears and sees our gratitude through the way we live our lives.

Jesus Is Our Treasure

In the Christmas story, we are told that the Magi followed the brilliant star in the sky to find Jesus. These noblemen were seeking the *"king of the Jews"* (Matthew 2:2). The star led them to Bethlehem and *"on coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh"* (Matthew 2:11).

When the Magi entered the house and saw the baby Jesus, they immediately *"bowed down and worshiped him."* Before they gave their gifts, they first showed their reverence. In essence, they gave themselves. Their hearts were filled with joy to be in the presence of the King. After they had shown Jesus their adoration, they gave their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh.

The Magi willingly gave their gifts because they had first given their hearts to Jesus. In much the same way that the Magi gave, the Apostle Paul refers to the giving of the people in the Macedonian churches. In his letter to the church in Corinth, he asks the church to give to the needy church in Jerusalem. As an encouragement for their giving, he refers to the

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grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. *“Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord . . .”* (2 Corinthians 8:2-5).

Both the Magi and the people in the Macedonian churches gave themselves before they gave their gifts. Stewardship is self-giving before it is money-giving. Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21). Through Word and Sacrament, Jesus reveals himself to us as our treasure, and for that our hearts are eager to respond in generous giving.

For a Godly Church

Leadership may determine the church’s level, but you and I determine its character. Someone has suggested:

- ♦ If the church grows, it is because your attendance is regular and you invite and bring friends regularly.
- ♦ If it is an active church, it is because you are committed to her ministries and give your time and influence to them.
- ♦ If it is a scriptural church, it is because you insist on nothing short of biblical preaching and teaching.
- ♦ If it is a friendly church, it is because you are friendly. You take the initiative to meet and greet new and old alike each week.

- ♦ If it is a soul-winning church, it is because you are a soul winner and you are interested in bringing others to Christ.
- ♦ If it is an educated church, it is because you attend the Bible School and other educational opportunities and desire to learn the Bible.
- ♦ If it is a giving church, it is because you give, not just of your tithes and offerings, but of your God-given abilities and time.



Let’s work at making the church that kind of church. It takes all of us working together with our leaders and with each other. Our concern for others must be evident, and our burden for a lost world must have top priority.



Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!

Quilts of Valor

Pictured below is the quilt that Harold Swisher received from The Quilts of Valor Foundation in recognition of his service to our nation.



Church Office Holiday Hours

The church office will be closed for Christmas from Thursday, December 24, to Monday, January 4, 2021. Messages left on the office phone will be checked throughout the time the office is closed.

December Celebrations

Birthdays

01 Kathy Parsons	14 Patricia Abbott, Zach Ryan
03 William Goldsmith	15 Myna Baumgartel
05 Nancy Harter	19 Holly Murphy
06 Paul Helmick	20 Kathryn Holloran
09 Betty Brooks	21 Catherine Bostic
10 Clark Haynes	23 Arlene Booten
12 Sarah Abbott	27 Brock & Braelynn Massey
13 Robert Massey	29 Jeremy Coleman, Robert Alan Deitz, Kay Grimes, Megan Young

Anniversaries

15 Bill & Barbara Buckalew	26 David & Holly Biondi
23 Don & Kim Barnard	

Do you have an event you want to advertise on our church website, southcharlestonfirstumc.org? Send your information and a picture, drawing, cartoon, etc. to Barbara Brown at cbpnuts@aol.com. We can post information on the Home page and Event page. Just let us know what you would like to highlight and we will make it happen.

Church Website: southcharlestonfirstumc.org

Did you miss an online service? Want to see the service again or share with family and friends? Visit: <https://www.youtube.com> and enter FUMC South Charleston into the search bar to locate the recorded sermons. We have over 22 recorded sermons to view.

Know someone who would like to follow our service, but doesn't have Facebook or internet service? Try our Sermon by phone option. Sermons are uploaded and available all week at anytime. **Call 1-304-223-3080** to hear our latest sermon.

life @ 1st Church

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