

THE FLAME

Volume 51, Issue 12

December 2021

A child is born in Bethlehem, and hope floods our souls with joy!

A colorful illustration of the Nativity scene. On the left, Joseph is depicted as a man with a beard and a crown, wearing a green robe and holding a wooden staff. In the center, Mary is shown in a white dress with a blue mantle, cradling the infant Jesus in her arms. The background is a simple, light-colored ground.

The staff at First United Methodist church wish you
the very best of the holiday season.

Please join us throughout the month as we celebrate Advent.

Worship and Fellowship Opportunities

Sunday, December 5
Second Sunday in Advent/Communion

Sunday, December 12
Third Sunday in Advent, Chancel Choir Cantata, *Nativity Suites*

Wednesday, December 15
All Church Christmas Party, 5:30 PM

Sunday, December 19
Fourth Sunday in Advent, Carillon Bells Ring

Friday, December 24
Christmas Eve Candles and Carols Service, 6:00 and 11:00 PM



Pastor
Don Griffin

The holiday season is upon us once again. There are a few thoughts I would like to share with you about this time of year. The first is this term “holiday”. I know in recent years some have claimed that “they” were taking “Christ” out of Christmas. The term holiday is some type of conspiracy to rob Jesus of his birthday, but did you know the term “happy holiday (s)” was in use before the first War on Christmas declared by the John Birch Society in 1959. Happy Holidays literally means Happy Holy Days. When you consider that both Hanukkah, Advent and Christmas all fall within this period from Thanksgiving until Epiphany (January 6th), Holy days or Holiday is certainly appropriate. Why do people want to start division over something as simple as offering a greeting such as Happy Holidays? I think the war is not on Christmas but on human civility.

Another thing about the season that I do not understand is people wanting to argue about neighbors

who put their decorations up too soon or start playing Christmas music before Thanksgiving. Seth and I typically put our Christmas tree up the weekend after Thanksgiving. This is not a hard and fast rule, it is just how we have evolved to do it. Why does it matter if your neighbor goes Clark Griswold the day after Halloween? Why does it bother you that some people are listening to Bing Crosby sing White Christmas wearing Bermuda shorts in early November? Should this time of the year not be about the things that bring us joy? I’ll admit that I’ve already watched 8 different versions of **A Christmas Carol** thus far in November. I absolutely love the story of redemption of Scrooge and the message Dickens shares with us about hope for the future even during a time as bleak as London of the 1840s.

Now let’s talk about busyness. I suppose my greatest problem with the holiday season is how busy we all tend to be. Some of this is from the special time and having gatherings of family and friends and that can be so wonderful. I was telling Seth last night as we prepared and ate our Thanksgiving meal (he goes to his mom’s house for the actual day this year) how stressed my mom would get during the season and I was confused as a child as to why. I now understand. Planning, buying, preparing is an arduous task. I think I made three

trips to the store in two days to pick up the stuff that we forgot to buy the first trip. Worrying about gifts and being concerned about forgetting someone. Being stressed over the division that always seems to come up at gatherings. I fear we lose the joy that this time of year because we crowd it out with stress. Maybe we should learn the magic word (no) when our schedules become too hectic. Perhaps we should stop trying to create the perfect holiday and just embrace a time to sharing with those we love.

I remember one Christmas Eve that I’d like to share. I was serving in Jones, Oklahoma and the parsonage was next to the church. The night was cold and clear as I walked home from Christmas Eve Communion, the kind of night where you could see every breath you exhaled. All the time leading up to this moment was over. I felt like the world was lifted off my shoulders. The busyness was gone. Looking at the beauty around me, I felt so close to God. I stopped and stood still taking in this holy moment. I had no where to be and nothing to do but just be there with God. In some ways this is one of my favorite Christmas memories. I just basked in the love of God and the wonder of the creation. It was by far the best gift I received that year.

Cont’d on Page 3





MUSIC NOTES

By Joycelynn Davidson

Chancel Choir

Cantata

Sunday, December 12, 2021

10:00 am

Nativity Suites

A Cantata for Christmas

By Benjamin Harlan

Carillon Bells

Sunday, December 19

10:00 am




Kids' M&Ms have been busy this fall. Singing in worship, helping bring in the food sacks, and delivering to NERA are among the activities we have enjoyed.



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Regardless of where you are on the “Merry Christmas” vs. “Happy Holiday” debate, or when and how or even if you decorate for the season, or how many Christmas songs you sing and Holiday shows you watch, or how many parties you plan or attend, please make time for God somewhere. Find a reprieve from the busyness of the season and seek connection with the God who loves you profoundly. I think you’ll discover that it is one of the most wonderful gifts you will receive this year or any

year. I still remember that moment and feeling the true nature of the season, profound love. I pray you will gift yourself by taking time to experience God’s profound love.

Happy Holy Days & Merry Christmas,

Pastor Don and Seth



As for me and my house

We shall serve

Cookies and cocoa

Christmas 12:21



Hey, youth! This last month was full of fun and fellowship. In December we will have WOW from 4 pm-5:30 pm on the first Wednesday, then on December 8th we will go see Christmas lights from 5 pm-7:15 pm!

We also have our sixth annual New Year's Eve Lock-in! Please feel free to invite friends to this event. However, anyone who is planning to attend will need to bring a parent with them to sign a couple of papers for the safety of everyone involved with this event. If you have any questions or would like to help with this event please contact me at the church office (580)-762-1681.

Blessings

Lindsey



WOW

Wednesday, December 1, 4:00 PM

Christmas Lights Tour

Wednesday, December 8, 5:00 PM

All Church Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 15th, 5:00 PM

No Activity, Wednesday, December 22nd

Youth Lock In

December 31, 2021, 8:00 PM-

January 1, 2022, 8:00 AM

Invite your friends to join the fun!



SACK OUT



SACK IN



649 Pounds of food delivered by the M&M Kids!



The people who receive this food will miss out on seeing the joy on the children's faces.





Congratulations
James & Laurie
Seidel
Winners of the
Chili Cookoff!





History of the Advent Wreath

Though there is evidence to suggest that Christians in the Middle Ages may have used lighted wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas, the first clear association with Advent is generally attributed to German Lutherans in the 16th century. However, another three centuries would pass before the modern Advent wreath took shape. Specifically, a German theologian and educator by the name of Johann Hinrich

Wichern (1808-1881) is credited with the idea of lighting an increasing number of candles as Christmas approached. Wichern was passionate about urging Christians to minister to the physical and social, as well as spiritual, needs of people. He was a man who put his teaching into practice, and one of his many acts of social service included the founding of a home for poor children, the Rough House, in the city of Hamburg. Tradition holds that as Christmas approached each year, the children would daily inquire about its arrival. In 1839, Wichern ingeniously thought to use a wreath as a teaching tool. For each Sunday of Advent, Wichern positioned a large white candle in a wreath. For every other day in between, Wichern placed a small red candle in the wreath.

Each day Wichern would light a candle and teach the children about Jesus. Thus, the children had a visual means to help them count the days until Christmas, and Wichern had an opportunity to help draw their focus to the purpose of Christmas. His idea was a success, and with time, it spread throughout Europe and on to North America.

Wichern's idea may also have influenced the modern Advent calendars that, beginning on December 1, count the days until Christmas. Like the Advent wreath, the Advent calendar also appears to have its origin in Germany. According to tradition, the Advent calendar was created by a Munich housewife for her children; the first commercial calendars were printed in Germany in 1851.



NEW HOME BLESSED

On November 22nd, Pastor Don had the joy of blessing a new home for Josh, Jeannette, Josiah and Riley Harbeson. What a great way to celebrate the holidays. Present for the blessing was Judy Million whose family donated family land to Habitat for Humanity for new Habitat homes. The Harbeson's new address is 1019 W Grand, 74601. You will want to add this to your church directory. Also pictured is Dolly Rolland, President of the Ponca City Area Habitat for Humanity.



CHRISTMAS

By M.E. Miro

Christmas is more than a day in December
 It's all of those things that we love to remember
 It's carolers singing familiar refrains
 Bright colored stockings and shiny toy trains
 Streamers of tinsel and glass satin balls
 Laughter that rings through the house and it's halls
 Christmas is more than a day in December
 It's the magic and the love
 That we'll always remember



The Funeral Dinner Group would like to say "Thank You" to Barbara Bridwell for being the chair person for Funeral Dinners for over 12 years. It will be hard to fill her shoes, but Darlene Petty and Valinda Goepinger are going to try. They will co-chair this important ministry of the church. Darlene and Valinda are asking for your help. They need people to work at the dinners, set up, cook, clean up, or donate side dishes. Men are welcome too! We want to start out with a new list of people who are willing to help. Even if you were on a previous list, please sign up again. There have been so many changes in all of our lives; it is hard to know who is still interested. We will have sign up sheets in the Welcome Center before and after church. You can also call or text either Darlene at 716-6834 or Valinda at 716-0337.



Stuck on what to buy as a gift? It's not too late, order pecans today!

**Call the office
(580) 762-1681**

Christmas Time

Christmas time is finally here.
It only comes but once a year,
And it's a time to spread good cheer
To those we love and hold so dear.

Christmas time is a time of glee,
A time when peace and love run free,
A time for those like you and me
To sit beneath the Christmas tree.

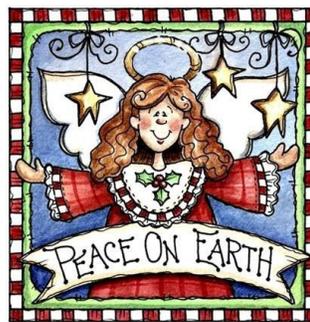
Christmas time is a time of joy,
A time to sit back and enjoy
The smile on each girl and boy,
As they play with a Christmas toy.

Christmas time is a time to share
The passing of another year.
Birth of Jesus, a joyful prayer,
To show loved ones how much we care.

Christmas time is a time for song,
A time for us to get along,
To make us feel Lord Jesus strong,
Forgive all those who did us wrong.

Christmas time is a time to pray,
Put love and kindness on display,
Show compassion along the way.
Christmas time should be every day.

~Ronald Poe, 2010



December Haiku

Herald Angels sang
Glory to the New-born King;
Jesus Son of God.

~Wayne Moore



Ho Ho Ho

We're Having a Party!

Everyone is invited to a church-wide Christmas Party.

Wednesday, December 15th
5:30 PM

Pizza is provided. You are asked to bring a favorite appetizer, or dessert to share. A craft project for the family is planned, followed by the movie *The Star*.

We will also have an ugly sweater contest.

So get out those Christmas sweaters and wear them with pride.

'tis the season...
**TO ROCK
UGLY
SWEATERS**



Hope to see you there!



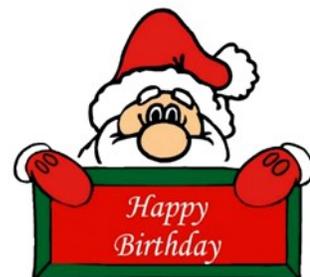


2021

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
			1 10:00 MDO 4:00 WOW 7:00 Choir	2 6:00 UMW	3 10:00 MDO	4
5 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Communion Children's Church	6 10:00 MDO	7 9:00 Intercessory Prayer 2:00 Handbells	8 10:00 MDO 5:00 WOW 7:00 Choir	9	10 10:00 MDO	11 9:30 Cantata Rehearsal
12 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Cantata Children's Church	13 10:00 MDO	14 9:00 Intercessory Prayer 2:00 Handbells 6:00 Trustees	15 10:00 MDO 5:30 All Church Christmas Party	16	17 10:00 MDO	18
19 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Bells Ring Children's Church	20	21 9:00 Intercessory Prayer	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 6:00 PM 11:00 PM	25 
26 9:00 Fellowship in Welcome Center 10:00 Worship Children's Church	27 OFFICE CLOSED	28 9:00 Intercessory Prayer	29	30	31 8:00 Youth Lock-In	

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Tom Carter	12/04	Trish Goodman	12/24
Grant Jackson	10/05	Natalie McBride	12/24
Lori Slater	12/07	Sue Lunsford	12/26
Dennis Wilson	12/08	Gary Cohenour	12/27
Debbie Roland	12/10	Natalie Grubbs	12/27
Edith Mears	12/13	Phillip Rice	12/27
Taylor Otto	12/14	Addison Kyler	12/28
Ann Jackson	12/21	Bonnie Otto	12/28
Steve Bookout	12/22	Lisa Hinch	12/29
Neil Hinch	12/22		



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Wednesday evening December 1 at 6:00pm we will hold our Christmas Gifts for Encouragement meeting. Come at 5:30 pm and share a delicious Tortilla soup supper and enjoy the fellowship.

UMW continues to take orders for pecans. This is a wonderful time to share pecans in wonderful food or even as gifts. Order your pecans early.

Put January 15th on your calendars now. We will be hosting the Northern Prairie District officers for their training meeting. The meeting begins at 10:30 AM and should be finished by 12:30 PM. We will be supplying breakfast/brunch snacks for those attending.

January 22nd at 9:30 we will have our own annual planning meeting. We encourage all to attend so we can plan a year that will be meaningful to all.

December 3rd and December 17th we will again be making sack lunches for the school

children and handing them out. We need people to make cookies and put them in baggies for the lunches. We also need people to come at 2:00 pm on those days to make sandwiches and pack the lunches. Please let us know if you are able to help on those days.

Church-wide Sunday Advent Study.

Mark Doyle will be leading an Advent/Christmas study on the Sundays of Advent and Christmas beginning December 5th at 6:00 pm. The discussions will be based on the daily devotional book *Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem* by John Outcalt. Books have been ordered and can be purchased on Kindle also. Bring a Christmas treat to share and enjoy the discussion.



Pastor Don and Seth will be on vacation December 27th—January 5th. Robert Montgomery will speak on January 2nd.



Join Sue Lunsford and Pastor Don for an insightful presentation about dealing with grief during the holiday season. This will be a podcast that will post on December 10th at 10 a.m. It will be available on our Facebook page and on YouTube.

Please share this on your own Facebook page so we can reach as many as possible. If you are struggling during this season, please reach out to Pastor Don or our Stephen Ministry team.



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December 2021 Daily Prayers



for our YOUTH

- Our Sons/Daughters, Grandsons/Granddaughters
& all the ones we love.

1

... but those who hope in the LORD will
renew their strength.
~ Isaiah 40:31

God of Hope, when XXX feels overwhelmed,
may he place his hope in You, knowing You
will renew his strength. Amen!

2

...But when you are tempted, he will also
provide a way out so that you can endure it.
~ 1 Corinthians 10:13

Savior Jesus, please strengthen XXX so she
is able to resist the temptation to reject
Your authority and satisfy her own desires.
Open her eyes to see the escape You have
provided. Amen!

3

You, dear children, are from God and have
overcome them, because the one who is in you
is greater than the one who is in the world.
~ 1 John 4:4

Awesome God, please imprint on XXX the
awareness that he is the child of the Most
High and He who is in him, is greater than
he who is in the world. Amen!

4

Hold on to instruction; don't let go.
Guard it, for it is your life. ~ Proverb 4:13

Dear Father, at each point when XXX has to
make a choice - right or wrong, may
instruction and wisdom be firmly in her grip
and she use it as a compass for her life map.
Amen!

5

... let us run with endurance the race
that is set before us. ~ Hebrews 12:1

Eternal Lord, as the school year
draws to a close, may XXX run with
endurance the race that You have
ordained for him. Please help him
finish strong. Amen!

6

If you return to the LORD, ..., for the LORD
your God is gracious and compassionate. He
will not turn his face from you if you return to
him." ~ 2 Chronicles 30:9

Jehovah God, when XXX errs, may she
never forget that You, the Lord her God, are
gracious and merciful. You will not turn
Your face from her if she repents. Amen!

7

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with
hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~ Romans 15:13

Sovereign Father, as XXX begins to enjoy
this season, may his knowledge of You
deepen so he trusts You more each day,
as You fill him with all joy and peace, and
he overflow with hope. Amen!

8

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be
courageous; be strong. ~ 1 Corinthians 16:13

Everlasting Lord, may XXX grow into
a wonderful strong woman who is
constantly on guard against temptations
and firmly rooted in her faith. Amen!

9

For everything in the world--the lust of the
flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of
life--comes not from the Father but from
the world. ~ 1 John 2:16

Father God, please give XXX a heart
that craves You above any worldly
human desires. Amen!

10

Cast all your anxiety on him because
he cares for you. ~ 1 Peter 5:7

Abba Father, please stir XXX to cast
all his concerns and worries upon
You, Lord, knowing that You care
for him. Amen!

11

Let what you heard from the beginning
abide in you. ...then you too will abide in
the Son and in the Father. ~ 1 John 2:24

Gracious Lord, may Your Word be firmly
rooted in XXX's heart. Give her a deep
desire to abide by Your will. Amen!

12

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,
for my power is made perfect in weakness."
~ 2 Corinthians 12:9

Savior God, may XXX understand
that Jesus' grace is sufficient for him,
as His strength is made perfect
in his weakness. Amen!

13

Respect everyone, and love your Christian
brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect
the king. ~ 1 Peter 2:17

Almighty Father, please teach XXX
how to develop good and respectful
relationships with the people in her
life; her family, friends, and even
acquaintances. Amen!

14

Whatever you do, work at it with all your
heart, as working for the Lord, not for
human masters, ~ Colossians 3:23

Precious Lord, may XXX learn to work
with all his heart at any tasks he
embarks upon, knowing he is actually
serving You, Lord, not man. Amen!

15

the LORD does not see as man does. For man
sees the outward appearance, but the LORD
sees the heart." ~ 1 Samuel 16:7

Loving God, when XXX questions her
self-worth, please remind her that
unlike man, You do not base her value
on social likes or her physical
appearance but on her heart. Amen!

16

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.
~ 2 Corinthians 11:14

Holy Father,
may XXX learn to differentiate Your voice and direction from the deceitful voice of the enemy who tries to distract with doubt, confusion and fear. Amen!

17

He has made everything beautiful in its time.
~ Ecclesiastics 3:11

Dear Lord,
please open XXX's eyes to see beyond the physical. Help her recognize the beauty and harmony in all Your creation, not just things that conform to the worldly definition of beauty. Amen!

18

A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.
~ Proverbs 15:1

Almighty God,
in acrimonious situations, please give XXX soft words to deflect anger as harsh words make tempers flare. Amen!

19

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. ~ Psalm 19:14

Everlasting Father,
may XXX know You as his rock and redeemer. May the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart be acceptable in Your sight. Amen!

20

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ~ Romans 8:1

Adonai,
may XXX understand that while the world may condemn, Christ has completely removed eternal condemnation for all who chose to live, move and have their spiritual being in Christ. Amen!

21

... 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty. ~ Zechariah 4:6

Dear Lord,
when XXX faces an obstacle, may he always remember that the solution is not by his might or power, but by Your Spirit. Amen!

22

... Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see, ~ Luke 18:41

Holy Father,
may XXX make quiet time with You a priority, so she not only speaks to You but learns to listen to Your voice. Amen!

23

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ~ Matthew 5:41

Everlasting Father,
please give XXX a servant's heart so he is willing to do good, going the extra mile for friend and enemy alike. Amen!

24

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ~ James 4:7

Gracious Lord,
as XXX makes choices throughout her day, may she submit to You Lord, resisting the deceitful lures of the devil. Amen!

25

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. ~ Matthew 1:21

Adonai,
as XXX celebrates today, may he be mindful that You are the ultimate gift, and sole reason for the season, not the perfect material gifts or beautiful decorations. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

26

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth." ~ Psalm 121:2

Blessed Lord,
whenever anxiety arises for any reason, may XXX proclaim that her help comes from the Lord, who is the creator of heaven and earth. Amen!

27

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ~ Psalm 103:8

King of Kings,
as life happens, please teach XXX that You are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Amen!

28

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. ~ Psalm 34:17

My God, my Lord,
may XXX have the full assurance that he is one of Your righteous, and when he cries for help, You Lord hear and will deliver him from his troubles. Amen!

29

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. ~ Matthew 6:34

Loving Lord,
please keep XXX mindful that her future is bright, there is so much joy to be had. May she not be burdened with disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of this life. Amen!

30

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." ~ John 13:35

Dear Jesus, You are Lamb of God, please stir XXX to live as Your disciple, loving others the way You love him. Amen!

31

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ~ Galatians 5:16

Gracious Father, as XXX prepares for the new year, please infuse her with an unshakeable resolve to walk in the Spirit at all times, not succumbing to gratify the desires of her flesh. Amen!