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Each year a love offering is collected for the church staff. The offering collected will be divided among the staff. If you would like to contribute, please mark your check or envelope staff donation. Thank you for your generosity.



Many Hands make light work. If you have never helped with the decorations for Advent, you have missed a great fellowship.

THE FLAME

Volume 50, Issue 12

December 2020



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 Opportunities

Joycelynn Davidson and the worship committee have planned each service to make it memorable. Several of the specials will be pre-recorded for playback during worship.

December 13th - The Bell Ensemble will play, and Kids' M&Ms will perform.

December 20th - The Chancel Choir Ensemble will sing.

(There will not be a cantata this year.)

December 24th - Candles and Carols is scheduled at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM.

We hope you will join us Sunday, December 13th at 3:00 PM in the parking lot as we roast marshmallows for s'mores, drink hot cocoa and sing carols.



Rejoice!



Pastor Don Griffin

I am writing this article for the Newsletter mid-November. Since this is the December Newsletter, of course the main theme will be about Christmas. But to date, Seth and I have not decorated our house. The church is planning to decorate after worship on Sunday, but to date that has not been done. It is mid-November, Thanksgiving but a week away and I must admit that I am not yet in the holiday spirit. Perhaps it is because this year has been so difficult and strange, but so far "it is not beginning to feel a lot like Christmas," at least not yet.

For most of us, the holiday season that begins with Thanksgiving and runs through Christmas is made up of family traditions. I think one of the biggest challenges for a couple when they first marry is how to adjust their schedules to fit the holiday traditions of two families into their new family. I know some of the most stressful moments occur when you tell Mom that you will not be home Christmas Eve because

that's when your spouse's family does their Christmas. It is difficult to let go of beloved traditions as we grow older, for they are a connection to our past and a reminder for most of us of a time past that we tend to memorialize. We forget the imperfections of those past holidays and just remember what was so beautiful about them. I think like Clark W. Griswold in *Christmas Vacation*, we are trying to recreate something that no longer exists.

This year will be tough on many of us. First, I know many of you have experienced a great loss in the past 12 months. Maybe this is your first Christmas since the death of someone incredibly special in your life. Some will be having to create new traditions since their marriage split up and now must juggle how to share the children for the holiday and still make it special for them. I think all of us are facing the reality of a "Covid" Christmas, where we are being encouraged to not have large gatherings or take those trips to see our elderly relatives. I think of all the years of my life, this is the one where Christmas, and the Christmas spirit, is going to be the most elusive.

I think one of the reasons that holidays are so difficult is that we simply cling to the past traditions so tightly. For many years, First United Methodist has had two Christmas Eve services, the first at

6 p.m. and the second at 11 p.m. The worship committee has decided to continue with two services this year but at different times. We will have the early service at 5 p.m. and the later one at 7 p.m. We are offering two services so we can spread out in the sanctuary and be as safe as possible. We will have communion, but it will be different this year with our Covid measures. Joycelynn is busily preparing music to make the night special. It will be easy for us to take note of the changes and immediately become critics of what we like and the parts we do not care for.

This article has a downer tone so far, but I intended to do that to lead you to this point...Stop being Clark W. Griswold! There is no perfect holiday. Yes, we have traditions and customs that are familiar, but by constantly trying to live up to a glorified image of the past, we fail to enjoy the precious moment we currently occupy. So, the family gathering is smaller, rejoice that you have your loved ones and can share the moment. Look for ways to connect to the past. Perhaps Facetime Thanksgiving meal with grandparents or the kids who cannot come home this year. Look for things you can do safely even in the

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December



2020

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
		1	2 5:30 WOW 7:00 Chancel Choir	3	4	5
6 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Communion Food Sack Sunday 3:00 Charge Con- ference 5:30 TYT	7 2:00 Bell En- semble 6:30 Bill Elliott's Bible Study	8 6:00 Board of Trustees	9 5:00 UMW Unit Meeting 5:30 WOW 7:00 Chancel Choir	10	11	12
13 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship 3:00 Carols & Cocoa 5:30 TYT	14	15	16 5:30 WOW 7:00 Chancel Choir	17	18	19
20 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship 5:30 TYT	21	22	23	24 Carols, Candles & Communion 5:00 PM 7:00 PM	25 	26
27 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship 5:30 TYT	28	29	30	31 8:00 PM Youth Lock-in Pickup time is 8:00 AM Friday		

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights." — Maya Angelou



The United Methodist Women

Wednesday, December 9th is the unit Christmas meeting of UMW. We hope you will join us to share a little Christmas cheer to special member of our church. We will meet at 5:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. There is just something about eating together that makes a meeting special. We are asking you to bring your favorite meal either from home or a take out from your favorite restaurant and we will enjoy each other's

company as we eat socially distanced. Drinks and dessert will be provided. There will be a special musical presentation.

Suzi Lenhart is taking orders for pecans this year. They are still \$13.00 a pound.

Included in the Flame is a Reverse Advent Calendar. Instead of getting a treat or a gift on each day of Advent, we are asking that you fill a box with food on the days of

Advent. When we get to Christmas we should all have a nice box of food that we can take to NERA to share with those who may not be as fortunate as we have been. Sometimes it is hard to see beyond our problems to see how blessed we really have been in a very confusing time. Please join us in sharing with others while preparing for Christmas.



**Be sure to join us
Sunday, December 13th
at 3:00 PM.
We will meet in the parking lot
for hot cocoa, s'mores
and Christmas carols.**



Mother's Day Out



We need to increase enrollment in our Mother's Day Out program. If you know someone who would benefit from our program, please give them the church phone number. They may also find information about the program on our website.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Tom Carter	12/04	Neil Hinch	12/22
Grant Jackson	10/05	Trish Goodman	12/24
Lori Slater	12/07	Natalie McBride	12/24
Dennis Wilson	12/08	Sue Lunsford	12/26
Debbie Roland	12/10	Gary Cohenour	12/27
Phil Howe	12/11	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

For Your Birthday



Cont'd from page 2

time of Covid. Go enjoy the lights in the park and on the homes of your neighbors. Send cards to people you might not be able to see this year. Rejoice in what you have and not what is different. Focus on the real meaning of Christmas, that God sent his son into the world to offer hope and life to the lost. Jesus is the reason and I fear He often gets lost in the hoopla of the season.

I'm thinking I'm ready to decorate the church this Sunday. Seth and I will put our tree up Thanksgiving night or the day after. I'm already listening to some Christmas music on XM radio. Rejoice and make the season special.

Pastor Don



NOVELS AT NIGHT

Our book for December will be *Tending Roses* by Lisa Wingate. A heartfelt novel about the bonds of family and the power of second chances.

We will not be having a meeting and will postpone our traditional dinner party.

I want you all to stay well. Please call with your book recommendations. I hope to see you soon.

Gineta



PRAYER CORNER

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in unity. Let our praise and worship echo in these walls and through our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity.

The joy of discovery, that moment when hope and expectation were gloriously met by the illumination of one bright star. We cannot imagine what words were spoken by visitors or if first impressions left them somewhat confused.

Messiah, Savior, a King born in the barest of palaces. Yet they saw and fell down on their knees in adoration. Lord, they saw you and knew whom they had met. As we meet around crib, candle or Advent wreath draw us into that stable in our imagination.

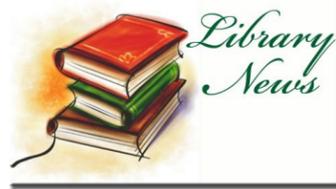
In the quiet moments of prayer this Christmas, that brief oasis from the bustle of the world bring alive to us the smell of the hay, the sound of the animals, the cry of a baby. Draw us close to our Savior, Messiah and King as we bring not Gold, Myrrh or Frankincense but the gift of our lives the only offering we can bring.



Beginning in January, *The Flame* will no longer be mailed to peoples' homes. You will be able to access the newsletter on our website fumeopc.org or pick up a copy at church. If you do not have access to the internet and would still like to have a hard copy, please notify the office (580) 762-1681.



**It's official!
Lindsey McGee
is now serving as our
Youth Director.
Please wish her all the best!**



LIBRARY NEWS 2020

The books listed below are all on the 2020 UMW Reading List.

Midnight Teacher – Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School by Janet Halfmann. Based on a true story, this book is an inspiring testament to a little-known pioneer in education. Over the years, Lilly Ann taught hundreds of enslaved people to read and write. Many of her students went on to share their knowledge with their families. This book takes place in the mid-1800's in Mississippi.

Who Is My Neighbor? - By Amy-Jill Levine & Sandy E. Sasso. This book is sure to prompt rich conversations about friendship. It encourages new ways of seeing others and ourselves. A note for parents and educators is included. Although this is a children's book, adults will benefit from reading it.

Glory Happening – Finding the Divine in Everyday Places by Kaitlin B. Curtice. In this book, the author walks with us into the heart of glory, asking what it means to find sacred spaces in everything. Brian McLaren

The Aging of Aquarius – Igniting Passion & Purpose as an Elder by Helen Wilkes. Helen Wilkes, a retired professor and activist, takes readers on an inspiring jour-

ney to find renewed purpose in retirement. This book offers inspiration, practical steps, and extra resources to help re-ignite your passion, your purpose, and to effect real change in the world as an empowered elder.

How the Woman at the Well became the Well Woman by Donna Rhodes. This is the poignant life story of a woman's desperate journey to find love. Inspired by the biblical account of the woman at the well (John 4:- 4-30), this memoir is a remarkable testament to God's faithfulness and the power of His redemption. For those who think their lives will never change and those who are afraid to hope again, this testimony is transformative.

We Pray With Her – Encouragement for all Women Who Lead. More than 70 United Methodist clergy women under the age of 40 contributed prayers and devotion for this book.

Befriend by Scott Sauls. We live in a world where real friendship is hard to find. This book is a "Christian vision of deep friendship. Wise, biblical, and practical. It could change your life." Russell Moore



Original Hershey Cocoa Fudge

Dianne

2/3 C cocoa
3 C sugar
1/8 tsp salt
1 C evaporated milk
1/2 C water
1/4 C (1/2 stick) butter
1 tsp vanilla

Combine cocoa, sugar and salt in large saucepan. Add milk/water gradually. Bring to a 'bubbly' boil on high heat, stirring continuously. Reduce without stirring until temperature reaches a temperature of 232°F on candy thermometer. Remove from heat, add vanilla and butter. Do not stir. Cool until 110°F at room temperature. Beat until it loses some of the gloss. Pour in greased pan or dish.



Bacon Wrapped Appetizer

Dianne

Ingredients
* Bacon (not thick sliced)
* Club Crackers
* Brown Sugar

Directions
Top each club cracker with brown sugar. Wrap 1/2 slice of bacon around the craker. Place on a rack in a 13X9 pan and cook for 2 hours at 225°.



Better Than Anything Toffee Recipe

From Ann Bandy

[Prep Time Cook Time Total Time]
5 min 20 min 25 min

Ingredients

- 1 C coarsely chopped pecans
- 1 C (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 C granulated sugar
- 1/2 t kosher salt
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 1 C milk chocolate chips

Instructions

1. Spray a 9-inch square baking dish with cooking spray and line with parchment paper
2. Spread the chopped nuts in a single layer on top of the parchment paper
3. Add butter, sugar and salt to a heavy bottomed 3 quart pot
4. Bring to a boil over medium low heat, stirring frequently to dissolve the sugar
5. Once the candy is boiling, stir occasionally, slowly and evenly, until the candy has reached 290° to 300°F, or 'hard crack' on a candy thermometer.
6. When the candy has reached 290° to 300°F, remove from heat and gently stir in the vanilla extract.
7. Carefully pour the mixture over the chopped pecans.
8. Let the candy sit for a few minutes, undisturbed before sprinkling the chocolate chips over the top.
9. Cover the baking dish with foil and let sit for 5 minutes or until the chocolate has softened.
10. Remove the foil and gently spread the softened chocolate into an even layer. An offset spatula works best for this.
11. Place the candy in the refrigerator to completely cool. Give it at least 2 hours.
12. Lift the parchment out of the baking dish and place the toffee on a cutting board or solid surface.
13. Use a knife to gently break it into smaller pieces.
14. Store in an airtight container in a cool place.

Caramel Corn Puffs

Dianne

Ingredients

- 1 bag puff corn (about 5 ounces)
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- pinch salt
- 1/4 tsp baking soda

Instructions

1. Pour puffed corn into a large bowl, large enough to stir the final mixture without making a huge mess.
2. Combine brown sugar, butter, corn syrup, vanilla and salt in saucepan.
3. Boil 2 minutes, if you want soft corn puffs, stirring continually.
4. OR Boil 4 minutes, stirring continually, if you want the *crunchy version*.
5. After the allotted boil time, remove from heat and stir in baking soda. Mixture will foam.
6. Pour mixture over puffed corn and stir until all pieces are evenly coated.
7. If you are making the soft version, you are done. Enjoy!
8. OR if you are making the *crunchy corn puffs*, lightly grease or spray a large cookie sheet or roaster pan.
9. Heat oven to 250 degrees.
10. Quickly spread mixture onto baking sheet. (You need to move fast. It will start to harden up in the bowl.)
11. Bake at 250 degrees for 45 - 60 minutes, stirring every 10-15 minutes.
12. Let cool and then break into pieces. Enjoy!

Bonbons

Joycelynn Davidson

1/2 lb. butter
1 can Eagle Brand milk
32 oz. powdered sugar
Pinch of salt
8 oz. coconut
1 cup chopped pecans
Almond Bark chocolate

Melt butter, add milk. Stir in remaining ingredients. Refrigerate until firm. Roll into balls. Melt chocolate and coat balls.

Hint: Use 2 forks to lift balls out of chocolate.



Nutty Rice Crispy Cookies (great recipe for kids)

Dianne

Ingredients
1 package (10 to 12 ounces) white baking chips
1/4 cup creamy peanut butter
1 cup miniature marshmallows
1 cup Rice Krispies
1 cup salted peanuts

Directions
In a large microwave-safe bowl, melt baking chips; stir until smooth. Stir in peanut butter until blended. Add marshmallows, Rice Krispies and peanuts. Drop by heaping tablespoonfuls onto waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container.