

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

December 2022



Season of Advent

I can't believe it's December already. It's been an eventful journey thus far at the United Methodist Church of Patchogue.

As a church, we have touched the hearts of the people in the community through our food pantry, Thanksgiving dinner and our Christmas shoe boxes. I am honored to be the Pastor of a church that is so passionate about community service.

We have only touched the surface. I am excited and looking forward to God's plan for us as a church. Let's keep moving full steam ahead with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Let me welcome you to the Season of Advent. In this season, we prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ. This is a joyous and hopeful season in the church. Although Advent is not explicitly mentioned

in the bible, it is inspired by scripture.

Isaiah, a messianic prophet, foretold Jesus's birth centuries before it took place: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

In the Gospels, we see the fulfillment of this prophecy. "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as

your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Dec 4—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Matthew 3:1-12

Dec 11—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Luke 1:46b-55

Dec 18—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Matthew 1:18-25

Dec 24—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Luke 2:1-20

Dec 25—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, John 1:1-14

a son; and he named him Jesus." (Matthew 1:18-25)

The four weeks of Advent start four Sundays before Christmas Day. This is a season of reflection, penance, and expectancy as we prepare our homes and our souls to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Continued on Page 2



Circle of Concern

Bereavement

Prayers for **Jack, David and Erik Madden** who lost their 50 year old father. (Gail Hoag)

The family of **Harry Higbie**

The family of **Grace Mae Davies**.

Healing

Tom Clare who suffered a heart attack. (Kathy & Pete Halliwell)

Joys

Special thanks to all the leaders of our church who hold positions in various committees and boards. (Linda Werner)

Happy 60th Birthday blessings to **Rick Braile**, prayers for many joys in years to come. (Jackie Braile)

Congratulations to **Robert Queen** who accepted a partial scholarship to SUNY Alfred State University. (Pam & Conrad Queen)

Beverly Shifrin is home from rehab and doing well. (Gail Hoag)

Continued Prayers

DeAnna D'Amelio, Johanna Zeigler, Jim Brown, Louis Lopez, Joanne, Chantelle, Brenda Gibbs, Clinton Nared, Gracie, Kerry, Joe Tuzil, Kevin Clifford, John, Helga Janning, Allison, Cindy Gunnerson, Karl Knoth, Christian, Kimberly Helfst, Suzanne Tierney

—**Kathy Keating**

Keats1002@gmail.com

Birthdays In December

Dec. 8 Gavin Reese Bende

Dec. 10 Janet Alt

Dec. 14 Steven Rice

Dec. 19 Michelle Ryan

Dec. 28 Carol Kirschner

Advent (From Page 1)

The Advent wreath is the most common way to mark the passage of each week, with a new candle being lit every Sunday in Advent and on Christmas Day. Each candle has a specific meaning that relates to the Advent week it represents.

The first week of Advent starts on the first Sunday of Advent, known as Advent Sunday. On this Sunday we light the Prophecy Candle, which is purple. This candle symbolizes Hope, which reminds us of all that Jesus is coming and that He will lead us out of darkness and into salvation.

On the second Sunday of Advent, we light a second candle, known as the Bethlehem Candle, which is also purple. This candle represents Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. During the second week of Advent we are invited to reflect on God's promise of universal peace through Christ and how we can be an incarnation of that peace in our daily lives by helping those in need.

The third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday and is all about Joy. Gaudete is the Latin word for "Rejoice," and on this Sunday we light the Shepherd's Candle. The third candle is pink, which is the liturgical color that represents joy. The joy we celebrate this week is the joy of our faith, the joy that we have experienced so far this season, and the joy at the coming of Christ.

The fourth Sunday of Advent is all about Love—specifically, God's love for the world, Christ's love for

all of us, and our love for our neighbors. The fourth candle on the advent wreath is once again purple, and it is known as the Angel's Candle. This candle serves as a reminder of the angel's message, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

There is a fifth candle in the center of the Advent. This candle is called the Christ Candle and it is white to represent Christ's purity. It is lit on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to celebrate the arrival of Jesus. Lighting the Christ Candle along with the other four candles represents the end of the Advent season.

Let me close with this Advent prayer written by Rev. Jerry Chism.

Oh Immanuel, God with us, truly in this Advent season we celebrate that you are not hidden in some faraway cloud, but you chose to be with us in the blur and mystery of our lives. In the midst of lists and rush, you are with us as a song that echoes in our minds, as the light of a candle, as a card from a friend. They are signs of your presence. We turn to you this season and pray that you would birth joy and healing, blessing and hope in us. Let something wonderful begin in us — something surprising and holy. May your hand be upon us. Let your love fill us. Let your joy overwhelm us. Let our longing for you be met on a coming holy night. Immanuel with us once again. Amen.

From my family to yours, we wish you a Blessed Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

—**Pastor Debbie**

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

December 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7:00 p.m.-AA	2 10:00 a.m.- ESL 7:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	3
4 10:00 a.m.- Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	5 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.-AA	6 10:00 a.m.- Noon-Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.-AA	7	8 7:00 p.m.-AA	9 10:00 a.m.- ESL 7:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	10
11 10:00 a.m.- Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	12 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.-AA	13 10:00 a.m.- Noon-Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.-AA	14	15 7:00 p.m.-AA	16 10:00 a.m.- ESL 7:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	17
18 10:00 a.m.- Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	19 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.-AA	20 10:00 a.m.- Noon-Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.-AA	21	22 7:00 p.m.-AA	23 10:00 a.m.- ESL 7:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	24 7:00 p.m.- Christmas Eve Service
25 10:00 a.m.- Christmas Worship/ 6:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	26 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.-AA	27 Office Closed 10:00 a.m.- Noon-Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.-AA	28 Office Closed	29 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.-AA	30 Office Closed 10:00 a.m.- ESL 7:30 p.m.- Pentecostal	31

A Journey

We are now entering into the season of Advent, in preparation for the celebration of Christmas.

This is the time of Emanuel—God with us. Both the secular and spiritual celebrations tend to fill us with a sense of joyful anticipation and peace.

Coming at the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas is a story of an incredible journey—that of the Three Wise Men or Three Kings.

Imagine those three dignified men, dressed in elegant clothing, traveling for an unknown distance, bringing expensive gifts, fit for a king, to a poor little child, living in what was essentially a backwater of the Roman Empire. Amazing that wealth and power should humble itself to someone who, in the worldly scheme of things, was no one of importance.

And that star. I remember reading that around that time in history, there was a rare alignment of two or three major planets, which would have produced a brilliant light. Certainly bright enough to guide the three over “field and fountain, moor and mountain.”

Who were these guys?

They were called magi, from the Greek word *magoi*. They were learned, literate men, often the officials of royal courts, perhaps those of Persia, Arabia, perhaps even India. They may well have studied the stars. Persia had a traditional belief concerning magi and a star which would predict the birth of a ruler. We know that those three, representing knowledge, wealth and power, trav-

eled a long way to honor Jesus as if he were a king. So is this Biblical account, found only in Matthew, historically accurate? Or could it be an apocryphal tale, told to make a point, but not entirely factual?

To me, it doesn't matter, because the story speaks to me of something beyond bare facts. It speaks to me of the profound and universal longing of human beings to know God, to know there is a God, to feel connected to the Divine, even in the midst of the insanely contradictory physical plane of existence.

I like to imagine these men, in the years before their journey, studying the heavens and the wisdom of theirs and other cultures. Looking always for the moment when all the signs and prophecies and knowledge converge and point the way to the Divine.

Imagine the hope blossoming in their hearts as they realized the moment had come, and they prepared to travel for perhaps as long as two years, sustained always by the hope in their hearts. Imagine their joy as they beheld the Child.

Appreciate the irony as they presented the symbols of earthly wealth to the beautiful child, who had no need for the rich gifts, who transcended earthly values. And imagine them on their journey home, transformed by their experience, uplifted by the presence of Emanuel—God with us.

Aren't we like those magi in our deep longing for God? As it says in Psalm 42:

“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the

living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?”

Is there anyone who doesn't thirst for the living water? Yet, too often, we fool ourselves by channeling that need into a desire for material things, into a competition for wealth, power, and status. We fill up our lives with stuff, and then wonder why we feel so hollow.

The journey of the Wise Men didn't end when they presented their gifts to the Christ child, just as our journey shouldn't end when we leave church on Sundays.

Our journey toward God should continue into even the smallest moments of our lives. If we can remember that we are loved by God, are accepted by that which is so much greater than ourselves, then we can continue our spiritual journeys with glad and hopeful hearts.

—Barbara Becker

Finding 'God's Next' For United Methodism

Pandemic and schism have combined to challenge The United Methodist Church in an unprecedented way.

And that offers a not-to-be-missed opportunity, according to the Rev. Mike Slaughter.

“What a time to reimagine what God's next is for The United Methodist Church,” the retired United Methodist megachurch pastor told a Dallas gathering on Nov. 16.

About 300 clergy and laity came to Lovers Lane United Methodist Church for “Space at the Table: Conversations of Hope for the UMC Future,” and others joined by livestream.

A follow-up to a similar event held in Atlanta in August, "Space at the Table" offered panel discussions with United Methodist academics and young clergy of the denomination. Another panel featured three South Central Jurisdiction episcopal leaders: Bishops Cynthia Fierro Harvey, Ruben Saenz and David Wilson, who was elected earlier this month and is United Methodism's first Native American bishop.

The program included the airing of a video podcast with retired Bishop Will Willimon, author of the new book "Don't Look Back: Methodist Hope for What Comes Next." The Rev. Michael Bowie, national director of the denomination's Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, also spoke and shared a sentiment that seemed to be a consensus.

"Normal will never come back," he said.

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered United Methodist life, with many churches still seeing significantly reduced in-person worship attendance.

On top of that, U.S. annual conferences have, since 2019, approved more than 820 local church disaffiliations. Many of those churches are choosing to enter a new, breakaway traditionalist denomination, the Global Methodist Church.

In such an environment, gathering faithful United Methodists for candid, forward-looking conversation is needed, said the Rev. Stan Copeland of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, who joined the Rev. Bill Britt of Peachtree Road United Methodist

Church in organizing the Dallas and Atlanta events.

"We just hope we come out of this with a renewed sense of excitement and also a sense that we're rebirthing something," Copeland said.

Some speakers, including Slaughter in his keynote address, made a point of showing their love and appreciation for The United Methodist Church.

"This is the community that has formed me and allowed me to have questions, to change, to be different, to grow," said Slaughter, pastor emeritus of Ginghamburg (United Methodist) Church in Ohio, which under him grew rapidly and became a recognized leader in small-group ministry and missions.

But Slaughter also called for clarifying United Methodist priorities. "Jesus is Lord, and everything else is conversation," he said.

After his address, Slaughter told UM News that the old models of church growth, which worked during his career as pastor, may no longer be viable. He said house churches and other smaller models are needed, and a more engaged faith.

"We're going to see more of a focus on calling workers than worshippers," he said. "In the New Testament, 87 times Jesus said 'follow me,' two times he said 'believe in me,' and zero times did he say worship me. ... What if we practiced the teachings of Jesus instead of talking about the teachings of Jesus?"

In the podcast that was aired, Willimon and the host, the Rev. John Stephens of Chapelwood United Methodist Church in Houston, also

dug into the question of how a church remains relevant today.

Willimon repeated his contention that inward-looking local churches are doomed while outward-focused ones have a future.

A longtime, well-known provocateur within the denomination, Willimon chided progressives and traditionalists who walk away from one another.

"It is dangerous, even blasphemous, for me to say, 'Lord, I want to be at your table, but I'm bothered by these people around me,'" he said. "We're not allowed to do that."

In the academics' panel, the Rev. Rebekah Miles of Perkins School of Theology urged The United Methodist Church to embrace full LGBTQ inclusion and get on about mission.

The Rev. Natalya Cherry, of Brite Divinity School, said "it is in our (Methodist) DNA" to be on the side of the oppressed, including LGBTQ persons.

The Rev. Maria Dixon Hall, chief diversity officer at Southern Methodist University, said the denomination has other neglected constituencies.

"I don't want us to think we have finished with issues of race. ... We have a lot of house-fixing to do," she said.

During the bishops' panel, Saenz noted the changing demographics of the U.S., and said his views about how the church needs to change have been shaped by conversations with young people.

His fear, he said, is that older United Methodists "won't hand over the reins."

Continued on Page 7

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Save Your Old Magazines

Dave Hollowell would very much appreciate your saving the magazines you have read and passing them on to him. He takes them for the enjoyment of adult and nursing home residents and shut ins. They can be dropped off in the church office.

The deadline for the January issue
of **The Link** is December 23.
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

God's Next (From Page 5)

The topic of getting beyond institutional preservation and the usual ways of doing church surfaced in the young clergy discussion as well.

"Adaptation is not innovation," said the Rev. Bryant Phelps, pastor of the (United Methodist) Church of the Disciple in DeSoto, Texas.

The Rev. Scott Gilliland, pastor of Arapaho United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas, said during the same panel that his church is growing, in part by welcoming those fleeing denominations that require what he described as "ideological purity."

"I say that in Christian love," he added, drawing laughs.

But Gilliland bore down on the point — echoed by Willimon — that for all its flaws, The United Methodist Church offers much to those who have felt wounded by other churches.

"They want to have a place where they won't be called a heretic, but someone who is working out their faith," Gilliland said. "They're finding that in The United Methodist Church."

Harvey, former president of the Council of Bishops, told the crowd that the conversations at "Space at the Table" had encouraged her.

"They're honest. They're raw. They give me hope."

—Sam Hodges, UMNS

A Church Closing That Hits Home

The church I grew up in is closing and I am responsible for selling it. To be honest, I never thought I would write those words.

I am a fourth-generation United Methodist from rural, southwest Oklahoma. My parents owned and operated a carpet store until my father's death in 1997. Two generations before him farmed cotton and peanuts.

First United Methodist Church, Carnegie, nurtured me since birth, walked alongside us during the darkest days of my family's life, affirmed my call to ministry and sent me forth on the last Sunday of June 2003 to serve three small churches.

Now I'm the director of connective ministries for the Oklahoma Annual Conference, and my responsibilities include managing the conference's closed churches. This fateful task falls to me, and the list will soon include First Church in Carnegie.

As with many churches across our connection, Carnegie's few remaining members just can't keep up with the costs of appointed clergy, even part-time, along with building maintenance, utilities and other expenses.

Methodism arrived in Carnegie three years before Oklahoma became a state, in the form of a Sunday school gathering taught in an old schoolhouse on the site of the Carnegie Cemetery.

A Methodist Episcopal Church South church was dedicated on Independence Day 1904 in a one-room building on South Broadway. A Methodist Episcopal Church (North) officially organized on Oct. 15, 1904. The two churches became one on Oct. 15, 1919. They moved into their current building in 1939.

It is this building, at the corner of Broadway and Ash, that saw its final

worship service on the afternoon of Nov. 20.

The church family has experienced setbacks and hardships through the years. The ME North church building burned on March 18, 1910, just as construction was wrapping up. Before the ashes had cooled, the church voted to rebuild.

The Great Depression threw the church another curveball. Rising to the occasion as they always do, the women of the church raised money by serving plate lunches to the local Rotary Club. They started this project on Dec. 7, 1938, and continued the tradition for the next 82 years without interruption.

I can remember all of my Sunday school teachers. I remember vacation Bible school during summers and UMYF meetings on Sunday evenings. I have no idea how much pizza, Oreos and Kool Aid I have consumed in that basement.

And Christmas! What a magical time. The handmade Chrismons adorning the ceiling-height tree. The beautiful greenery strung around the sanctuary and the candles in the sills of the stained-glass windows. All I have to do is close my eyes, and I am back there.

But the main thing I realized through my years in that church is just how much Jesus loves me. His followers taught and showed me his love.

My head can comprehend all this. But my heart still breaks.

—the Rev. Derrek Belase, UMNS

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 Previous services available.



Fall Projects

As we do each year, we have repaired the five aging outside masonry staircases.

They were then painted and silicone-sealed to protect them from the freezing and salt of winter.

The following members worked on the stairs: Lenny Pearson, Bob Prince, and Cindy Amodio.

The deteriorating metal handrail on the long outside staircase on the West end of Wesley Hall had not been painted for more than a decade.

The following members wire wheeled, applied rust neutralizer and painted the hand rail: Trudy Mansfield, Bob Prince, Bob Rogers, Ed Klingel, and Peter Halliwell. Thank you all for a job well done on these projects.

— Dave Hollowell

Thanksgiving Dinner

At our 2022 Church Thanksgiving dinner, we served 55 in house and distributed 71 take out dinners.

Food to feed 29 Disabled Vets was taken to them on Thanksgiving Day.

A home for mentally challenged adults in Bayport received food to feed 14 people on Friday. Thank you to all those who helped to cook turkeys, set up, served them and cleaned up after the dinner.

—Lenny Pearson



To Remember What Christmas is All About

Lord, I thank You for coming to earth so You could redeem me. When I think of the extent to which You were willing to go in order to save me, it makes me want to shout, to celebrate, and to cry with thankfulness. You love me so much, and I am so grateful for that love. Without You, I would still be lost and in sin. But because of everything You have done for me, today I am free; my life is blessed; Jesus is my Lord; Heaven is my home; and Satan has no right to control me. I will be eternally thankful to You for everything You did to save me! I pray this in Jesus' name!

—Rick Renner, crosswalk.com