



The Little Harbinger

Bethany Memorial Church

December 2020

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL

The Pastor's Pen

by Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins

As we enter December, many are saying 2020 can't end soon enough.

It may come as good news, then, to know that on the church calendar, with the first Sunday of Advent, we have already entered the new year.

The scriptures for the Advent season don't jump right to the Christmas story. They remind us to "watch" for a while and to "be ready" for when Christ enters our lives again in new and powerful and unexpected ways. After all, though the Christmas story is familiar to us, it was most startling when it happened.

Yes, people were hoping for a savior for the world, but they thought it would take a mighty king to bring the help they

needed. Instead, God came in person, but as a tiny baby, completely vulnerable as human babies are, born to a poor, young, unmarried couple, in a barn, in a land conquered by the world power of the day. It was so unexpected that most people missed the arrival of the savior all together.

Advent comes to remind us not to miss the savior in our own time.

As we move through pandemic, political upheaval, economic uncertainty, we may once again start looking for a mighty sign of God's world-changing power.

Advent calls us to look for subtler signs. It calls us to watch and be ready for something like a tiny

infant who, at first unnoticed, eventually changes the world. It calls us to notice nature testifying to God's grace and beauty, a stranger engaging in random acts of kindness, our neighbor's unrelenting work to right society's wrongs. Advent invites us to identify all good things as signs of God's work to re-make the world.

Advent reminds us that God has, in fact, already saved us. That young infant, grown to adulthood, stood firm in the power of love against the lesser power of evil. Though crucified, he lives forever, bringing the promise of hope and new possibility for us all.

This Advent new year let's watch and be ready to notice how God is continuing to save the world. Let's notice and give thanks!

Wilkinsburg Trip Cancelled

Shortly after the 2016 mass shooting in Wilkinsburg, Pa that left 6 people dead and 3 injured, Outreach Chair Debra Hull reached out to see how Bethany Memorial Church members could assist the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg in its community endeavors. For the next four years, members of BMC and Bethany College students travelled to Wilkinsburg to volunteer at “Santa’s Workshop,” a fun day held in early December for the children of the community. Small toys, hair accessories, notebooks, markers, etc. were collected from the congregation and taken for distribution to the children of Wilkinsburg as prizes in games and activities.

This year, the call went out for both volunteers and toys. As expected, the congregation responded. Toys and other items began to accumulate at the church, as you can see from the picture on the right. (There are more now as this picture was taken a couple of weeks ago).



But in the midst of shopping and planning, the event was changed. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, “Santa’s Open House” had to be replanned to minimize the possibility of spreading the virus. Volunteers from outside the community were asked not to come, a perfectly understandable request. The children of Wilkinsburg will still receive their gifts, but in a slightly different setting.

The gifts at BMC will be delivered. Financial support was provided. Know that your contribution will still make a child’s day joyous. We hope and pray that next year, things will be back to “normal.”



The envelopes started showing up in the offering plate several years ago. Usually five dollars, sometimes ten. And on that envelope the mystery person doing the giving would designate it for some particular use. At first it was the “dishwasher fund,” then the “snowblower fund, the “coal stove fund,” the “Corona” fund and the “limes for the Corona” fund. None of these funds actually existed other than in the mind of the giver, although the funds were appropriately designated in the church books.

Other than the monies designated for the dishwasher fund, the giving that lasted the longest was probably that of the “Keurig coffee pot” fund. And so it was that Floyd McFadden was surprised with a new Keurig coffee pot ready for use in Heritage Hall one cold November Sunday. In these days of pandemic, probably not a bad idea.

BMC Congregational Board Report

Helen Moren, John Rodenberg, Gerard NeCastro and Karen McFadden attempt to change the light bulbs in the minister's office.



THE GREEN TEAM

How many Disciples does it take to change a light bulb? Apparently at least 4 as we can see in the photograph to the right. Actually, more than four, since this group was, through no fault of their own, unable to complete the task at hand.

The BMC Green Team reported at the November Congregational Board meeting that almost all bulbs in the church building had been replaced by LED lighting. There are still two lights in Heritage Hall that will require a 20-foot lift to change.

In addition, the Team spoke with the president of the Bethany College Environmental Science Club and committed themselves to work with involved students in acquiring a recycling bin in town, and, until that end is achieved, assisting in runs from town to nearby recycling locations. In the Spring, the Green Team will be planting trees on the east side of the church and the west side of the Old Meeting House.

2021 BMC BUDGET

Also discussed at the Board Meeting was a proposed budget for the year 2021. The budget will be sent to congregational members as amended for what will be a vote by email or ballot. This accommodation is necessary because of the recent closing of the church for in-house worship. The major changes in this year's budget involves earmarking \$35,000 of the annual Forrest Kirkpatrick trust allocation to be used for necessary updates and repairs to the Old Meeting House. The estimated cost of repairs exceeds \$35,000, and a capital campaign is expected in the future. In addition, raises are proposed for employees of the church.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Reverend Watkins reported that she had met with the Worship Committee to plan for Advent and Christmas, the Stewardship and Finance Committee to conduct the annual stewardship campaign and budget process, the Trustees on revising the building use policy, the Personnel committee on salary review for employees, and was continuing with weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies.

She has been in touch with Bethany College students who have been attending Sunday morning worship services, and reported that one student had joined as an associate member. (Sidenote: Since the Board meeting, one other student has joined as an associate member and two as full members). She reported on her work with the Bethany College and community.

Lastly, she informed the board that "Anita Weaver has given her notice as Custodian after many years of faithful, loving service," and noted that "We will miss her – probably more than we can imagine." There will be a search for a new custodian.

(Next month, we will provide a detailed explanation of how your contributions to Outreach were used in 2020.)



Poinsettia Orders

Every year during Advent, friends and family of BMC are invited to purchase poinsettias to honor or memorialize a loved one. For a couple of Sundays and on Christmas Eve, the plants provide additional beauty to the decorated sanctuary. Individuals are invited to pick up their poinsettias after the Christmas Eve service.

This holiday season, in-house worship is not taking place because of the Covid-19 pandemic which seems to have hit Bethany with a vengeance. But the poinsettia(s) you purchase can still be seen and admired during streamed Facebook Live services.

Poinsettias are \$12.50 each. The order has to be into the florist by Friday, December 4, which doesn't give us much time. If you are interested in purchasing any, please call the church office at 304-829-7138 and leave a message stating how many and for whom. You can then drop a check in the mail which may not arrive before the deadline, but your order will still be placed.

If you live locally, you can pick up your poinsettia some time after the Christmas Eve service by appointment.

Seeking Part-time Custodian

**Bethany Memorial Church 303 Main St. Bethany, WV
Old Meeting House 6778 Bethany Pike, Bethany, WV
(304) 829-7138**

Pay: Competitive:

- Flexible hours.
- 5 hours/week

Responsibilities:

- Weekly cleaning, dusting, vacuuming, and sanitizing of BMC building, including sanctuary, offices, bathrooms, kitchens and other spaces.
- Keep track of cleaning supplies and needed repairs
- Monthly cleaning, dusting, and sanitizing of Old Meeting House

References Required.

Begins: Immediately

To apply, please contact: Church office (304) 829-7138

Office@bmcwv.org

2020 Christmas Offering

REJOICE

A special day offering of
Disciples Mission Fund

When they saw the star,
they rejoiced exceedingly
with great joy.

Matthew 2:10



 2020 Christmas Special Offering

Our finest gifts supporting the Ministries of our Region

Received December 13th & 20th in most Congregations

Our REGION...

connects congregations to each other

Fosters faith development

Assists churches in calling new ministers

gathers Disciples in camps, conferences, and assemblies

interprets the global mission of the church

Nurtures the development of a new generation of pastors

represents the church in ecumenical gatherings

Counsels and prays with those who are troubled of spirit

walks with those in conflict

Inspires leaders to experiment and create

leads the church to address racism

witnesses to the power of God to make things new

Bethany Memorial Church will be collecting for the Special Day Christmas offering on December 13 and December 20, as well as any day in between! This offering is important because the money given stays in our region. Please consider giving to the Christmas offering by sending your check or money order to the church, or by using the donate link on the BMC web page (bmcwv.org).

We thank you in advance for your support of this important ministry.

Another Giving Opportunity

We invite you to contribute to the BMC “mitten tree,” a collection of winter hats, scarves, and gloves and mittens of all sizes, shapes and colors. These items will be donated to the Salvation Army with the hope of providing warmth to disadvantaged individuals this winter. Since the church is locked, you can leave any donations by the door or call the church office, and someone will pick them up from your front porch.

In addition, the Office of Student Services at Bethany College is collecting new coats, hats, and gloves for students who may not have appropriate winter outerwear. Once again, if you want to make a donation, you can drop it off at the church or call the church office. In addition, you can drop these off at the Office of Student Affairs.



The Hanging of the Greens



Above, clockwise, Deb Hull decorates the Crismon tree; Gerard NeCastro hangs wreaths while supervised by Vicki NeCastro; John Rodenberg lights the first candle of Advent.



I was curious about the beautiful Nativity set the church puts out each year. So, I texted John Cole, who called Charlotte Chambers. Between the two of the, I learned the set was made by Eunice Marie Weed probably during the 1970s. In 1971, after both she and her husband retired, they became curators of the Campbell Mansion, where they lived in an apartment there. Eunice's husband died shortly after, but she stayed on becoming an active member of the community and church. It is hard to even imagine the time and effort that went into such a beautiful gift to Bethany Memorial Church. In her obituary, her love for ceramics was noted.

-Sydma

Prayer List

Therefore...pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. – James 5:16

Family and friends of Tony Mitch, who passed away on November 28, 2020

Russ and Jean Schwertfeger
Steve and Nikki Mitchell and daughters Liz and Emi
Keith Francis, Amy Van Horn, Eden Rice and boyfriend
All those affected by Covid-19 in our community and elsewhere

Nancy Pietrangelo (sister of Penny Tittle)
Penny Tittle
Jackie Andrews, Robert and Megan and Regan Andrews.
Charlotte Chambers
Mike Gostlin, son-in-law of Larry and Carol Grimes (husband to Becca)
Jeanne Cobb
David Gnatek (brother-in-law of Holly Hillgardner)
Tammy Ritchea
Ruth Tye, Jeannie Sarg Tye, and Jay Tye
Jack Hoffman
Ned George (father of David) and family

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Perry Jones, Jr.
Gary and Vonnie Larson
Jeffrey Yost
Shana Hatzopoulos
Sharon Poyneer (sister of Vonnie Larson)
Mary Sutherland (sister of Pat Sutherland)
Holly Cramblet Bowman
Caden Knisley
Ellen Sanford
Mary Jane Jackson
Holly, Frank, and Sharley Hillgardner
Elizabeth DeJong
Donna Norman (Becky Ayers' sister)
Dottie Smith
Linda Owens Walter

Birthdays and Anniversaries

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
-Ephesians 2:10*

7 – Jean Schwertfeger (90)
7 – Sydma Hatzopoulos
13 – Hannah Pearl Pauls
15 – Jennifer & Chuck Kilmer (1999)
16 – Ted Pauls

17 – Connie McVicar
20 – Rev. Larry Edward Grimes
26 – Jan Forsty and Penny Tittle (2014)
29 – John & Debra Hull (1972)
31 – Rev. Daniel & Nancy Harry (1988)



A special thank you to Marc and Joyce Chernenko for the gift of wreaths for the doors of the old meeting house.

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