From the Pastor

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” Luke 2:20

When our babies arrived, the news spread quickly. We called grandparents and aunts and uncles. We called the church office and the “prayer chain” started. With our firstborn, a page in the info book of Riverside Hospital’s respiratory therapy breakroom heralded the news. Both births were listed in the East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church’s newspaper: “East Ohio Today”. The internet was not what it is today … I actually mailed birth announcements to many people.

For Mary and Joseph, as labor pains intensified they frantically searched for a comfortable place to welcome their first baby. However, they had to settle for a manger. There were no trained professionals to help, no comfort of medicine or even a fluffy pillow. The Christ Child was welcomed by a trusting couple and a stall full of animals.

The news spread. Angels sang and shepherds hurried to see. Stars shone – one in particular – and wise man began a long journey towards Bethlehem. Scripture does not mention townspeople gathering or newspaper articles being written. It seems to be the shepherds who return to their lives changed by a little baby’s birth. They couldn’t stay silent! They sang and glorified God.

Thousands of years later we are still asked to tell the story … proclaim the birth … send forth the announcement …. Jesus is born!

What if sharing the news of Jesus’ birth was up to you?

In reality – it is!

Will you tell the difference Jesus makes in your life to the world?
Will you glorify and praise God with enthusiasm; with a sense of gratitude?
Will you spread the news … as if the world depended on you for the Good News?

I hope during this Advent and Christmas Season many more will come to know what God has done … Jesus comes to save … because of our faithfulness in telling the story. Let’s glorify and praise God together, until the whole world knows!

Pastor Sondra
Through The Years

It’s the Christmas season and it’s always interesting to look at some of the holiday traditions that are observed around the world. This year we are taking a trip “downunder”.

In Australia, while celebrating many of the activities we do, they also have their own unique slant on Christmas. A popular dessert at this time is Pavlova, named for the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. It is basically a meringue shell with a marshmallow center covered with sweet cream, and fruit toppings. It sounds delicious! Another Aussie Christmas tradition is “Carols by Candlelight”. These are large gatherings of people who sing Christmas carols with candle illumination. They draw thousands of people to large parks. The event now includes celebrities and symphony orchestras. The tradition began in Melbourne in 1938 when Norman Banks, an Aussie radio announcer, was walking home from his nighttime radio program on Christmas Eve, 1937. He passed a window and saw an elderly woman sitting up in bed listening to “Away in a Manger” on the radio and singing along with her face lit by candlelight. Banks wondered how many others spent Christmas alone so he organized the first concert in 1938. Approximately 10,000 showed up for that first event. It is now a staple of the holiday season every year. Other cities began their own concerts and now Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, and many others have “Carols by Candlelight”, too.

Over in New Zealand, the Poutukawa tree is called the Christmas tree. This is because it produces large crimson flowers in December and is used as a holiday symbol. While both Christmas and Boxing Day (Dec. 26) are legal holidays in New Zealand, it is interesting to note that no advertising is allowed on television or radio on Christmas day. This rule also applies to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, has a popular Santa Parade down Queen Street. The parade features floats and marching bands and is held in late November. (Sounds like their version of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.)

One difference with the Australian and New Zealand celebrations is that Christmas occurs in the middle of summer. Quite often a “barbie on the beach” takes the place of our traditional meals. Church attendance skyrockets (sound familiar?).

Nevertheless, most homes still have trees with decorations. Church attendance skyrocketed in late November. (Sounds like their version of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.)

Be sure to mark your calendars for Christmas CrafterNoon: An Ornament ADVENTure! It will be Saturday, December 7 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. This is an outreach event, so please invite people to join in the fun. Then the following week, the annual Christmas play will be performed. This year the play is The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. Reserved seats are available at www.mentorumc.org/bookflix/.

I was a little sad that no one took me up on the November Positive Parenting Book Club. The next one is scheduled for Tuesday, January 14 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Sign up at this link https://bit.ly/2QavOUE The book is Queen Bees & Wanna Bees by Rosalind Wiseman. This is the book that Tina Fey used to create the movie and Broadway musical Mean Girls. You will want to read the third edition as it is updated to include technology. This book might make a great Christmas present...

In my efforts to continue to share with you some insights from the ETCH Conference, I want to share from Josh Straub, Ph. D. He and his wife, Christi, cohost a podcast called “In This Together” and coauthored a children’s book titled What Am I Feeling? I have been sharing this message from him with many people: “We don’t need therapy; we deserve therapy.” Parents, as you consider your parenting style and methods, it is so important that you are modeling for your children. What we do, what we say, how we act, and how we react are all being watched by our children. While that seems like a daunting thing to consider, I want to point out that we are all broken. It is how we react to our brokenness that our children will model. When we own our brokenness and react in the way that God calls us to react, we are showing our children how to handle life. What are you going to do to tend to your soul?

I am here for YOU! Please let me know how I can resource you in your journey of being your child’s primary spiritual trainer. My prayer is for you to be the parent God wants you to be, I know that it is difficult as I am in the throes of parenting as well. I want to come alongside you in this journey. Let me know how I can do just that.

By HIS Grace and through HIS love,
Tammy Palermo, Director of Children and Family Ministries, tpalermo@mentorumc.org

Ruth-Naomi Circle
Thursday, December 12 at 11:30 AM, Scrambler Marie’s - Mentor Avenue

Join us for lunch and a time of fellowship. Please bring a small wrapped gift (white elephant or something no more than $1-$2) for a fun game and story. We also ask that you bring an unwrapped knit item for a child (gloves, mittens, hats, scarves).

In case of inclement weather, our policy is not to meet if Mentor Schools are closed. Please check one of our local TV channels or call the Church Office (255-3496) -- we will advise the church if we are canceling our meeting.
Christmas Giving Trees:
This year’s Giving Trees includes ornament tags supporting the following organizations:
- Birthright
- Helping Hispanics Hope in Christ
- McCurdy
- Forbes House

Christmas Offering Designations:
The Missions Committee has designated the following distribution for the the 2019 Christmas Offering:
- 1/3 Local: Helping Hispanics Hope in Christ
- 1/3 National: Red Bird Mission (Kentucky)
- 1/3 International: GBC Missionary in Liberia (Helen Roberts-Evans)

Christmas Eve Ushers 2019
Volunteers are needed for ushering during the five Christmas Eve Sanctuary services.
Please consider serving your congregation, and meeting new people by ushering!
A sign-up sheet will be at the Information Hub beginning December 1. You can also sign up through the website and app. If interested in ushering but hesitant, training will be provided in the Narthex on Monday, December 9 or Tuesday, December 17 from 7 – 8 PM.
If you have further questions, please contact Chris Meldrum at (440) 220-0824.

Christmas Schedule of Events 2019
December 1: Christmas Craftsmenoon. 1 PM to 3 PM in Fellowship Hall
December 8: Christmas Cantata, Sanctuary Services at 9 AM and 11 AM
- “[Joy Has Dawned]” by Lloyd Larson, featuring Mentor & Painesville UMC Choirs & Orchestra
December 14: Christmas Play The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. 4 PM with potluck following the performance, featuring our Truth & Light Players, reserve tickets at https://mumctlp.booktix.com/, Fellowship Hall
December 20: Christmas Sing XXIII, Charter Members Men’s Choir and Painesville UMC Men’s Choir, 7:30 PM, Sanctuary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services
- 3 PM: Holy Communion in the Sanctuary with Special Music
- 5 PM: Child-Led Service in the Sanctuary
- 7 PM: Traditional Service in the Sanctuary with Charter Members Choir & Modern Music in the Sanctuary
- 9 PM: Traditional Service in the Sanctuary with Canticle Bells, Chancel Choir and Hallelujah Chorus
- 11 PM: Traditional Service in the Sanctuary with Special Music

Giving Trees
The Christmas trees in the Gallery and outside the Chapel are decorated with different giving ornament tags. Select an ornament and show Christ’s love.

Green Trees: GIVING Gifts for children in need. Gifts are due back by noon on Sunday, December 15 and should be wrapped with the tag securely attached. There is a 2-part tag. Please fill out one and place it in the box below the tree. This gives us your contact information. The second tag is to be placed on the gift. If you would like to shop for a whole family, please contact Betsy Iskra as soon as possible at jskra5@aol.com or call/text 440-283-6524.

Red Hearts: SHARING Monetary donation to a charity may be placed in the envelope provided and placed in the box at the Information Hub. For security, the box will be in the Office during the week.
Charities are: McCurdy, Birthright, Forbes House and Helping Hispanics Hope.

Yellow Angels: PRAYING Pray for the name or group listed throughout the holiday season.

Blue Bells: CARING Suggestion for something you can do to help others.

“Paul was a committed disciple. May God bless him in heaven for his love of teaching and sharing Jesus with our youth.” He truly exemplified being a disciple! “Some of the first Bible verses I memorized were in his 4th grade Sunday school class! He was also the one who really taught us how to use the Bible we’d been gifted the year before as 3rd graders, how to find what we were looking for instead of relying on someone to tell us where to turn.”

“I assisted Paul one year as he taught 4th grade Sunday School. Such a quiet gentle man. He amazed me how thoroughly he knew his Scripture.” I think Paul really enjoyed teaching the 3rd graders how to use their new bibles. He definitely knew the bible well! “He spent a lot of time preparing his Sunday school lessons. He often brought in photos from his trip to the Holy Land to show the children the places where the Bible stories took place.” This was a true gift for his students! “Faithful Servant does not even begin to describe this man. I cannot remember a time when he was not teaching Sunday School at MUMC.” - Agreed!

Paul also helped with the Heartland services regularly and will be missed by the group that goes there. He was also a regular participant of the Christmas Caroling and would say that spending the time caroling with others was his Christmas. At the funeral, it was interesting to hear from an architect where he asked if he was needed. I always tried to give him those three months off as respite.

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Shhh it’s a Surprise…

As Rev. Bev Wrobel transitions to a new position at Ohio Living, on December 15 we will celebrate Rev. Bev’s ministry at Mentor United Methodist Church.

In preparation for that day we are creating a SURPRISE Gift of Memories. You are invited to join in celebrating Bev through the sharing of your special memories from the many years Bev has blessed this congregation with her connection, care, and counseling.

Your pictures, personal letters, and cards can be dropped off in the Church Office or emailed to tsimons@mentorumc.org ASAP. All items need to be turned in by Friday, December 13. Please contact Teresa Simons at 440-255-3496 if you have questions.

Please remember… this is a surprise.
December Prayer Focus – Worship

God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5: 8

Compared to December, there is no greater time throughout the year for people to hear and receive the Good News of God’s love. Jesus is born to bring God near ... and ultimately will die so that all might discover how serious God is about all knowing how beloved they are. Pray for our music ministry as songs tell the Good News. Pray for our drama as words and actions seek to deliver the Good News. Pray for our pastors as they prepare messages that will convey the important message of Jesus. Pray for lives to be changed ... for a community to be transformed... for the world to be different. Pray that every person would offer his or her life back to God ... in response to what God has offered in Christ. THAT WILL BE WORSHIP!

God is with us; He is called Immanuel. Pray that all will know Him by name.
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