

December 2023/January 2024

Message from the Pastor:

Advent is upon us. Christmas is in sight. 2024 is upon us as we prepare for this last month of 2023. I pray that we have each found enjoyment in these last months. I pray that the challenges have been lessons learned and confidence building experiences. I pray that even in the grief we have felt the presence of the Lord enveloping us. I also pray that as we arrive at the advent of a new year, we trust in the Lord and seek to be people who answer the call of discipleship.

For the Advent season we will be lighting the candles of the advent wreath. While we share in the Sunday readings of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on the Sundays of December, there are also some other 'names' that are sometimes shared for the four candles:



- *The first candle is also the "Prophecy Candle" as a reminder of the prophets of old who told of the coming of the Messiah. In particular Isaiah prophesied of the birth of Christ.
- *Second comes the "Bethlehem Candle" of course calling to mind the journey made by Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the place of the child's birth.
- *Next is the "Shepherd's Candle" which reminds of the joy found in the angel's message to the lowly shepherds that night and the joy found in the arrival of the Messiah as a babe born in a stable.
- *Finally, the fourth candle is also known as the "Angel's Candle." It signifies the message of "Peace on earth, good will to men" as they shared with the shepherds.

Just as we each have traditions around the season with our families and friends, the church has traditions through the season. Each congregation, each denomination or faith community, celebrates with their own traditions. The differences may bring education and growth as we listen and share together. But in all of the season of Advent, we are invited as believers to anticipate the arrival of the Messiah, to prepare for his coming once again and to celebrate the joy of the Emmanuel, God with us, together.

Nancy White

A PRAYER FOR PEACE IN CONFLICT

John Birch, faithandworship.com

God of healing and peace, be with all whose lives are touched by conflict. For relationships, broken and damaged, those arguments so difficult to resolve. For parents whose children, though loved since birth are almost beyond control. For those who live in neighbourhoods controlled by gangs, living in fear. For countries mired by civil war. For senseless violence anywhere that leads to loss of life, friends, family, and makes this world a more fragile place for your people, our neighbours, to live. Loving God sow seeds of peace. Sow peace in the hearts of all those who are in positions of power. Sow peace in the hearts of all those who strive for a better world. Sow peace in the hearts of all those who can make a difference, and that includes me, in my small corner of this, your beautiful, though troubled world. May I be a source of healing and peace in my neighbourhood, church, wherever you lead me, and to whom you lead me. Loving God, I pray..

IN MEMORY

Barry Lee Smith

October 9, 1939 to October 13, 2023



Christmas Concerts

Tuesday, December 12

Hurricane Civic Chorus Christmas Concert at Forest Burdette UMC at 7:00 PM

Robert Jackson is a part of this choir.

Tuesday December 12

Brass Band of the TriState Christmas concert at Smith Hall in Huntington at 7:30 PM

Randy Doss is a part of this Band

Sunday December 17

Symphony Band Holiday Concert at Spring Valley HS at 3:00 PM

Randy Doss is a part of the Band

Christmas Devotions

Pastor Nancy will share an advent devotion each week on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 via Facebook Live. The devotions will center on the message for the coming Sunday of Advent.



ECCHO Christmas

We will be serving seven families of the community with our Christmas Boxes again this year. The items needed are posted with the boxes in the Sanctuary hall way. The delivery date will be December 17-23, so please have items in the containers by **Monday, December 18.**



ECCHO News



The ECCHO Christmas Shop, hosted for the last several years in our church, has routinely benefited over 200 children each Season. Last year there were 240 children and teens who received gifts from ECCHO through this mission. The goal of everyone working to assist the caregivers who “shop” with us is to assure all feel comfortable and welcome at Milton UMC. We work together to choose the best gifts for each child. We strive to show Christ's love and do what we can to make sure everyone leaves feeling good about their visit to our church. Each year we witness tears of gratitude and hear words of appreciation when many say, “If it wasn't for ECCHO, we would not have anything to give our children for Christmas.”

In October, ECCHO helped 1,050 people from 350 families. Typically,

each household can come one time each month and receive a 3-day supply of food. So far this year Milton UMC's monetary contributions to ECCHO have totaled \$3,120. In addition, the offering given at the Community Thanksgiving Service hosted by our church resulted in another \$418 to be given to ECCHO.

“Anything on SALE” is a great slogan for the next couple of months. When you're out grocery shopping, “Anything on Sale” is something you can bring to our ECCHO donation box. ECCHO can use any non-perishable food items that you might find “on sale.”

God gives generously and because of your gifts, Milton UMC continues to do our part in supporting ECCHO's ministry.



Winter Tree

Donations of mittens, gloves and hats are welcome for the ‘winter tree’ in Friendship Hall. They will be shared with ECCHO clients and families as well as the local schools.



Kroger Rewards

Remember to link your Kroger rewards card to the church. Visit <http://www.kroger.com>, and search either by name or YF746. Click “Enroll.” For more information, please speak with Gwen Reed.



Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24, will provide a unique opportunity for worship the day before Christmas. There will be worship at Bethesda (9:30 AM) and Milton (11:00 AM) as usual for the fourth Sunday of Advent. The evening will bring the Christmas Eve candlelight services with Bethesda at 5:00 and with Milton at 6:15.

Undie Month

A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who donated undies during October. The collection bin overflowed! You donated 276 pairs of socks and 167 packages of underwear. ECCHO and Ebenezer Outreach appreciates YOU!



Lunch for a Buck

We served lunch to over 70 at Marshall last month. Thank you to those who helped to provide "Lunch for a Buck" at MU Campus Ministry.

Office Hours

The church secretary is in the office on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM and continues to work from home on Wednesdays. On Wednesdays, you may call the church at 304-743-6461, send a text via 304-955-8924, or you can send an email to miltonunited@frontier.com and leave a message. Please note: the secretary will NOT be in the office on December 26 or January 2.



Finance News & Notes

I wanted to sit down and write a well-ordered update on our church's financial picture, one that would show our progress and challenges with a realistic attitude toward 2024. Once again, however, I just can't think what I should write for you. I guess my uncertainty is echoed in a lot of households since the beginning of the pandemic, in many charities and businesses. A great many churches are suffering from diminishing offerings and disheartening levels of participation. These same conditions are casting a very long shadow over our WV United Methodist Conference, where years of declining apportionment payments are compounded by the closure of 40 or 50 churches just this year, alone.

But my soul-searching reminds me that we are much more blessed than countless other churches our size. We have many faithful givers, and many of you also fill in gaps that develop as a result of new activities or prices, repairs to our aging yet breathtaking building, and the loss of long-time members. We are an aging congregation, but we are energetically reaching outside of our walls to lift up and love our neighbors around us. All our bills have been paid so far this year because one of the Lord's names is Jehovah-jireh, *the Lord*

Who Provides. As I am writing to you, one of my favorite songs is playing, "Jireh" by Elevation Worship & Maverick City Music. Listen to the 10-minute version. The chorus praises God by saying "You are enough. You are ever enough, always enough, more than enough!" If He clothes in beauty the lilies of the field, if He watches over each sparrow, how much will He love you? How MUCH will He love you? The leader calls and the choir echoes, over and over, "You are enough! More than enough for me!" which eventually becomes "You are enough! So I am enough!" I sang along with this song for months before I could sing "You are enough, so I am enough" without being stopped by tears. I never feel like I am enough. I am not enough to make it all fit nicely within our planned budget. We are not enough to cover what we have lost over the years. My Grandpa Sullivan always said, "Never worry about anything money can fix," words which were the most valuable inheritance I could have received. First things need to be first. For Milton Methodist, God's plan needs to be first, even if we don't see how we can do it. *God will provide for His plans.* We must each talk to Him and listen to Him and watch Him move, so that we will know what He is doing and how we can participate. Being part of what God is doing is the closest thing to heaven on earth. Listen to His call to you to do your part of His merciful plan. Think on these things as you prepare your 2024 pledge card. And please pray for your financial team as we work to prepare a wise and inspired financial plan for 2024.

Jennie Spoor, Chair



The folks at Life Line will return to Milton UMC on Wednesday, February 28.



Worship Opportunities

MUMC offers various ways to worship. We offer a worship service in the sanctuary at 11:00 AM.

You can listen on radio station 101.3 FM from the parking lot and the area around the church, if you prefer. The service can also be found on Facebook Live each Sunday at 11:00 AM, which will then be on the church's Facebook page (mumcwv) and the church's website following the live service. An order of worship is posted under the "Sunday Services" tab and on Facebook, and videos are posted as soon as possible.



Thank You!

Thank you to those who provided and served the lovely reception following the community Thanksgiving service. It was a delightful time together.



Christmas Meals

- ▶ We are sponsoring a free Friends & Neighbors Christmas Dinner on Thursday, December 21, from 5:00 PM until 6:30 PM. We would greatly appreciate any help you can provide.
- ▶ Our church family luncheon is Sunday, December 10, following the morning worship. The meat, bread, and drinks will be provided. Please bring vegetables, a salad, or a dessert.



December

- 8 Terry & Lisa Polen
- 26 Bill & Martha Deel

January

- 18 Till & Genny Curry



December

- 2 Martha Deel
- 5 Bob Foster
- 8 Michael Cooper
- 9 Becky Cooper
- Jean Eads
- 14 Jennie Spoor
- 16 Gary Cooper
- 20 Katherine Cooper
- 25 Jade Wallace
- 28 Nancy White

January

- 6 Joseph Boggess
- 9 T. J. Caldwell
- 10 David Templeton
- 11 Adelaide Madelly
- 21 Chris Webb
- 22 Lisa Polen
- 25 Robert Klinestiver, Jr.
- 26 Lara Lawson
- 29 Jean Powell

If your birthday or anniversary is not listed or incorrect, please contact the church office.



December Activities*

- 2 Hanging of the Greens, 9:30 AM
- 3 Holy Communion
- 10 Church Family Luncheon, After Worship
- 11 Finance Committee, 6:00 PM
- Church Council, 7:00 PM
- 18 Deadline for Items for the Christmas Baskets
- 21 Friends & Neighbors Christmas Dinner, 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM
- 24 Christmas Eve Service, 6:15 PM
- 25 Happy Birthday, Jesus!
- 31 Noisy Offering
- Fifth Sunday Sing



January Activities*

- 1 Happy New Year!
- 7 Holy Communion
- 8 Trustees, 6:30 PM
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 23 **Deadline for News for Feb/Mar Newsletter**
- 28 Noisy Offering
- Worship Ministry Team After Morning Worship

**All dates and times are subject to change. Please check weekly bulletins for updates. Also, the Mack Thomasson Sunday School Class meets each Sunday at 9:45 AM.*