

# GraceNotes

*The Newsletter of*

## **The United Methodist Church of Manton**

Church phone: (231) 824-3593

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Worship with us Sundays at 10:30 am.

Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 9-Noon, Thursday 9-11 am.

**December 2019/January 2020**

### **Pastor Jeff's Jottings**

The holidays can be an especially tough time of the year for the less fortunate in our communities. The weather changes and those who have been living in tents all summer now have to find a place to live. Those who have been living on garden vegetables all summer long now need to find another source for food. This problem is closer to most of us than we think.

Our church receives requests almost weekly for assistance for someone in need. They need gas to get to the doctor, they haven't had a decent meal in a few days, and they need help finding a place to stay are all common requests this time of year. I have a desire and a longing to help as many people in need as possible. Actually, it's more than a mere desire to be helpful. Sometimes it is a strong conviction that I am looking straight into the eyes of Jesus Christ.

But the same question always seems to arise. How do we know we are truly helping someone in need? How do we know that this person is not just trying to take advantage of us? The ultimate answer is that we don't. But in the spirit of the Christmas season we have to ask ourselves, "Do we practice justice, mercy, and truth on the most basic human level?"

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us not to judge others. He challenges us to pay attention to our own attitudes and motivations and not to be concerned with the failures of others. He reminds us to ask for what we need.

So back to the question of wondering if we are being taken advantage of by someone who really doesn't need the assistance. The real answer is that it doesn't matter. There are no guarantees that the person I give food to is really hungry. But I do know that if I were in their situation, I would appreciate receiving the help I need. That is how I would want to be treated so why wouldn't I do the same for someone else? I can respond to the need presented to me and leave the true outcome to God.

Today at every possible moment do justice, practice mercy, and reveal truth in the most basic, easy, and human way. It is in this small step that our souls will find renewal, that our hearts prepare to celebrate the Christ Child, and that others can see the true light. Merry Christmas and blessings to you all!!

Pastor Jeff

*They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish. ~Psalm 107:38-39*



December

## Did you know?

Did you know Ruth Ward along with Pastor Jeff refurbished the bulletin board in the fellowship hall? Ruth edits the new dry erase monthly calendar and keeps the bulletin board less cluttered. She decorates the bulletin board at the top of the stairs at the side entrance (a must-see for anyone coming in that door). She also changes the blackboard in the ramp entryway. Ruth takes the Ad Council minutes and gets them to Mary for the newsletter. This year she was either asked or volunteered to take care of the flowers at the ramp entrance. Now that's a list of volunteer jobs. Thank you, Ruth for all the work and volunteering you've done at your church. You have a gift and it shows.

*If you have a "Did You Know" article for a future newsletter either email it to the church, slip it under the door of my office or hand it to me. You can leave it at any time. – Mary Kibbe*

## Cookie Walk

Our Cookie Walk will be held December 15 after worship. Fill a box for \$10.

## Thank you

Thank you everyone for your prayers, cards and memorial donations at the loss of my mother. It is such a good feeling to be a part of such a caring congregation.

–Lois Matteson

## More than a wreath and candles

The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as Christmas approaches. Lighting its candles is a common practice on the four Sundays leading to Christmas.

Different color combinations for the candles are used depending upon the church or denomination. Some churches use four blue candles around the wreath with one white candle in the center, while some use all white candles. Many denominations light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth Sunday and a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

The wreath, the candles and the colors all have symbolic significance. Here are just a few of the many and various interpretations:

- The circular green wreath symbolizes the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. Green represents eternal life.
- The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents one thousand years. They total 4,000 years — the time from Adam and Eve until the birth of Christ.
- Purple, in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence.
- Blue is another color often used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use blue candles to symbolize the night sky and the anticipation of the announcement of Christ's birth. Blue also symbolizes the beginning of a new creation as in the waters of Genesis 1.
- The first purple candle signifies Hope.
- The second purple candle stands for Peace.
- The pink candle for the third Sunday symbolizes Joy and signifies the halfway point of Advent.
- The final purple candle is for Love.
- The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — "the light of the world."
- The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV).

## Ad Council minutes for October 22, 2019

**PRESENT:** Pastor Jeffrey A. Swainston, Bob Swanson, Dick Raymer, Dana Raymer, Liz Dykgraff, Noelle Wallace, Jane Fleming, and Ruth Ann Ward

Lighting of the Candle: After the lighting of the candle, the meeting was opened with prayer.

Devotions: Jane Fleming

September 24, 2019, meeting minutes were distributed, read by council members, voted on and approved.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**EDUCATION:** Liz reported that the rummage sale was a big success. A total of \$634 was raised for the Education Committee. Liz is still looking for one or two more leaders for junior church.

**TRUSTEES:** Dick reports that all of his paperwork is ready for the Church Conference in Lake City.

Dick further reports that there are several items that need attention at the parsonage. The item that needs the most attention is the carpet in one of the upstairs bedrooms. He would like to check out the floor underneath the carpet and either simply refinish the wood floor or lay new carpet. Motion was made to allow Dick to go forward with this project, seconded by Char, and approved by members.

There was also discussion on replacing the serving table in the fellowship hall. Dick will get together a number for the cost of replacing that table.

There will not be the donation of a piano for the fellowship hall, as discussed last month. Thus, we will look into repairing our current piano.

**MEMORIAL:** Nothing new reported.

**ENDOWMENT:** Nothing new reported.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Jane held a meeting with committee members. The letters will be updated. Envelopes will be stuffed on November 5. The letters will be passed out to the congregation on November 10 and November 17.

Pastor's sermons will be based on stewardship on November 17 and November 24.

**MISSION AND OUTREACH:** Char would like to donate money to the school to purchase hams for those children in need again this year.

This year the church will hold a cookie walk on December 15. A box full of cookies can be bought with a donation of \$10. Funds raised may go to help church members in need.

**WORSHIP:** All Saints Day is November 3, 2019.

On December 10, a representative from Gideon Bibles will be here. The Second Sunday's basket collection will go to them.

Pastor will be taking renewal days from December 3 through December 10, 2019.

**STAFF PARISH:** Dana reports that her paperwork for Church Conference has been completed and submitted.

**FINANCE:** Noelle distributed the church's balance sheet, discussion followed, and they were accepted as presented. September had five Sundays and it was a better month donation wise. The church's shortfall now stands at \$5,826.54. The financial report is posted on the board in the fellowship hall.

A motion was made to remove Ruth Powell and Mary Roth from the Finance Committee, seconded by Liz and approved by members.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Pastor reports that requests for shoes through our shoe ministry are still going to Diane Siddall. However, given Diane's illness, she is currently referring those requests to Nancy Swainston.

The church is in need of a new copy machine. The old machine is eight years old and parts are no longer available to repair it. The old machine cost \$2300 with a monthly maintenance fee of \$35. We currently are using a rebuilt machine that would cost the church \$1200 with a monthly fee of \$20 for maintenance. Motion was made to purchase the rebuilt machine, seconded by Noelle and approved by members.

Church Conference October 27. Dinner is at 5:00 pm and the meeting begins at 6:00 pm.

Pastor has approved the church directory and we are waiting to receive them.

**PASTOR JEFF UPDATE:** Pastor's meeting with the DS and SPRC went well.

Pastor has learned that he may now lead classes for those interested in being a Laity Leader for the church.

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Next meeting is scheduled for: November 26, 2019

Volunteer for devotions for next meeting: Dana Raymer

Closing prayer: Jeffrey A. Swainston,

Meeting adjourned

Submitted by Ruth Ann Ward

## **A Christmas prayer**

O God our loving father, help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing that Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. —Robert Louis Stevenson

## **Family photo**

An 8-year-old girl was showing her 4-year-old sister some pictures from her Bible. The younger sister was fascinated by a picture of Mary and baby Jesus. After examining it intently, she asked, "But where's Joseph?"

The older sister thought for a moment and replied, "He's taking the picture."

## **Katie's Kidz**

Katie Greene of Weddington, North Carolina, has a heart of love. At age 6, she thought about what sort of Christmas the patients in the Children's Hospital would have. It occurred to Katie that, with help, she could provide a toy for each child. In 2006, she collected \$167 toward her efforts, calling it "the best time of my life."

The next year, she began a Web site called Katie's Kidz, and donations totaled \$2,600. Katie and her parents shopped for art supplies, board games, playing cards, gift cards and even iPod Shuffles. On Christmas Day, they took 600 toys to the hospital.

Katie put on a Santa hat and helped hospital workers deliver toys in red wagons. "Next year, we're going to do two hospitals," Katie said.

## **"O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

In 1865, a young American preacher named Phillips Brooks spent time in and around the fields of Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve, he attended worship in the Church of the Nativity, located on the site where tradition says Jesus was born.

Brooks was so spiritually touched by the experience that he later wrote a hymn for children to sing on Christmas Eve in his Philadelphia church. Lewis Redner, the church organist and Sunday school superintendent, composed the music for the beloved hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Today it appears in most denominational hymnals. Brooks, a giant of a man physically (6'6" tall), was known throughout America as an eloquent and dominant force in the pulpit.

There is a large statue of the gifted man of God in front of Boston's famous Trinity Church, where Brooks last served. His death in 1893 was a major event in Boston. Upon learning of his passing, a 5-year-old girl exclaimed, "Oh, Mama, how happy the angels will be."

## **Evergreen Tree**

These trees, which keep their green leaves year-round, are symbolic of Christmas, eternal life and God's everlasting love. In the Bible, evergreen trees are called the "cedars of Lebanon," suggesting growth (Psalm 92:12), height (Amos 2:9), fragrance (Hosea 14:6) and steadfast faith.

# The United Methodist Church of Manton

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*Address Service Requested*



*Open hearts, open minds, open doors.*

## December 2019/January 2020

There are no visitors in God's house, only family members we have not yet met.

If this is your first time worshipping with us, welcome home.

We are always glad to meet new members of God's family.

If you are looking for a church home, please join us as we follow Jesus.

Welcome! We love you and are so glad you are here.



*Come, let us  
adore him!*

*If you have an address change or no longer want to receive this newsletter, please notify us.*