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Connections

to fayetteville first united methodist church

Vol. XI #12
 December, 2009

Putting the Sleigh Before the Reindeer

Rev. Mark Westmoreland

Some facts: (1) I am writing this a week and a half before Thanksgiving. (2) Christmas this year is December 25, pretty much the same day as last year. (3) That makes December 24 Christmas Eve. I point out these facts because the calendar can be confusing. Or maybe it's a matter of which calendar you use.

Two weeks before Halloween, my son Matt texted me from a department store in Milledgeville where he is in school. He included a photo of a Christmas display. According to the official Retail Calendar (maintained and guarded somewhere in New York, I believe), Christmas Eve falls on the Tuesday after Columbus Day. The day after that is also Christmas Eve, as is the next day and the next, and so on, until December 26 when the After Christmas sales begin.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. In fact, I have to admit I enjoy the non-stop festive atmosphere—music, lights, televisions specials. I don't even especially mind being greeted with "Happy Holidays" (call me a heretic). Again, it's all a matter of whose calendar you're using. The goal of the Retail Calendar is to get folks into a Christmas/Holiday (i.e., buying) mood (i.e., frenzy) and keep them there as long as possible. If I were a retailer, I'd probably do the same.

But I'm not a retailer. I guess I'm a reteller. With you, I'm called to retell a holy and miraculous story year after year, and that story is the framework for OUR calendar, the Christian calendar. According to that calendar, the "Christmas season" begins December 25, not in October, and the month leading up to Christmas is the season of Advent.

And here is where it gets confusing: Advent isn't Christmas.

As the whole world screams "Christmas!" (or "Holidays!"), the church speaks, in a calm, even prayerful, voice, "Advent." As the world shouts "It's here!" we say, "We await him" (him, not "it"). Advent is a time to consider the world's (that is, our) need for Christmas and the salvation that comes with the one who is "God with us." Advent is a time of waiting in the promises of God. But waiting isn't easy. So, in our

impatience, we are tempted to skip Advent and offer instead the drama of the Nativity three shows a Sunday, all month long.

This year, let's try to trust the great story. I know that when I'm out and about I will enjoy all that the world's holiday season has to offer. But when we come to church let's put away the retail calendar and its rows of Christmas Eves and allow the great story to unfold at its own beautiful and miraculous pace. That way, when December 25 at last arrives, you and I will be ready to celebrate the wonderful news that everyone needs to hear: "Unto us a child is born ..."

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Mission Café

Our Mission Café happens four times a year on the 5th Sunday of each month that as 5 Sundays. At our last Mission Café, we collected over \$500 in monetary and gift donations for Gracie's Closet. We are supporting Heifer International with our next café on November 29. We will sell homemade baked items made by UMW ladies and others in our congregation, as well as cold and hot drinks. All proceeds will go towards the \$5000 we are raising to purchase an Ark from Heifer International. The ark provides 15 pairs of animals to change lives. Two cows could bring milk and income to an entire village. Two sheep could help provide warmth with cozy wool. Two oxen could pull plows and carts to create plentiful harvests. And that's just the first three sets of animals!

CMERRY
Christmas
 to your family

About Our Church Family

In Memoriam:
Sara Warren
November 1, 2009

In Sympathy:

Mr. John Warren upon the death of his wife, Sara Warren, on November 1.

Note of Thanks:

Thank you for all the cards and prayers during my recent sickness. It meant so much to me. Mildred Swygert

Keep Them In Your Prayers:

Millie Arnold	Annis Harrell	Angie McClanahan	Dot Smith
Joe Byers	O.C. Hendrix	Inez Perry	Don Saunders
Carolyn Clark	Estelle Howard	Mary Pierson	Jimmy Watkins
Carolyn Croft	Robert Kyzer	Brenda Smith	Bill Weinmeister

New Members

We welcome the following new members into the life and work of Fayetteville First UMC

Tom & Susanna Howle

200 Brogdon Road, Fayetteville, GA 30214-3832, 770-461-2856. We welcome the Howles by transfer from National Heights Baptist Church.

Genie Dzenis

67 Blossom Court, Sharpsburg, GA 30277-2028. Genie joins by profession of faith. Along with Genie's baptism, we celebrate the baptism of Genie and her husband, Gunars' daughters, Skylar (7), Kyara (5) and Kassey (21 months).

Bill & Pam Gross

786 Villa Way, Jonesboro, GA 30238. We welcome Bill & Pam from Liberty Baptist Church, Riverdale, GA.

YOUTH NEWS

Confirmation 2010

Are you a youth in 6th grade or above? Are you ready to learn more about our denomination, our church, and what it means to live as a follower of Christ? Come be a part of the 2010 Confirmation class. We will begin our five month journey together with an orientation for parents and students on Sunday, December 6th during the Sunday School hour in room C-280. For more information or details please contact Julie Harp at 770-461-4313 or JHarp@fayettevillefirst.com.

A Christmas Story

No, this is not the famed movie of Christmas Day played all day on TBS. This is the title of our Christmas series for 1|99. We will explore the Christmas story, but we will look at it through the eyes of Herod, Simeon, and Mary. Join us on Wednesdays for 1|99 from 6-7 p.m. in The Studio. 1|99 is for students in grades 6-12.

Youth Basketball is starting again!

If you are interested in being a part of the FFUMC team, contact William Dent at wident@gmail.com.

Youth Christmas Shoe Party

You heard right! Our youth Christmas party will have a "shoe" theme this year. Wear your craziest shoes with an outfit to match, or dress up as your favorite shoe! The party will be on Sunday, Dec. 13 from 6-8pm in the Fellowship Hall. Please contact Chris Mucha if you can help with the party!

Callaway Gardens Fantasy in Lights

Join us for our annual trip to enjoy Callaway's Fantasy in Lights on December 19. This is a trip for youth and their families. We have a great time spending time in the Christmas Village and going out in open air trolleys and experiencing the lights. You can sign up in the church Welcome Center.

Renovatus

We have named our annual spiritual retreat. Renovatus is the Greek word for "renovate" which is exactly what we do when we go on retreat. We get away and ask God to renovate us (renovat-us, get it?). The retreat will take place January 15-17. Sign ups are available now. We encourage EVERY student and adult that is involved in our ministry to participate in this retreat!

Opportunities for Giving

The renovations of the chancel area and bride's room create an opportunity to make a donation in honor or memory of a friend or loved one. New paraments are being made to enhance the new altar, pulpit and lectern. We will need 4 sets to cover the various liturgical seasons. Each set will cost \$250. Other items that are needed include:

- Advent Processional Banner - \$200
- Processional Banner Stand - \$575
- 2 Fern Stands - \$500
- Advent Wreath & Stand - \$2000
- Bride's Room Sofa - \$2500
- 2 Martha Washington Chairs - \$750 each
- 2 Chippendale Arm Chairs - \$440 each
- Console/Serving Table - \$700
- End Tables, Pictures, and Lamps

Please contact Joyce Mucha in the church office for additional information or to make a donation.

Invite someone to worship with popcorn and a movie

Who doesn't love a good movie, popcorn, and a reason to celebrate? We are offering just that with our pre-packaged worship invitations. As we begin the season of Advent, we encourage you to invite someone to come celebrate with us. Pickup an invitation to worship and share it with a friend or neighbor. They are available in the Welcome Center and kiosks.

What's for Supper?

December 2 Mystery Meal	December 16 Roast Beef Caesar Salad Potatoes Rolls
December 9 Chicken in Cream Sauce Rice Pilaf Vegetable Rolls/Dessert	Coconut Cake and Pudding
	December 23 & 30 No Wednesday Night Dinner

Attendance:

Nov. 1 Worship: 614 Sunday School: 345	Nov. 8 Worship: 723 Sunday School: 320	Nov. 15 Worship: 599 Sunday School: 290
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Church Membership: 2015

Our Giving, November 1-15:

Budget: \$77,613.26
Building Fund: \$2,440.00
2009 Budget: \$1,424,006.00

Amount Needed to Meet Budget: \$270,072.74

Kristin's Kids Korner

We have now entered the season of Advent, the time of waiting and preparation in the church. Although it often seems like we are anxiously awaiting the end of the hectic season and preparing for parties and presents, this season is truly about getting our hearts ready to receive the Son of God into the world and into our lives. This Advent, take time with your family to put aside the stories of sugarplums and red noses to rediscover the true stories of the season that allow us to rediscover the joy Christmas.



- Open any Bible to the Gospel according to Luke and read the first two chapters. Most children's Bibles feature the birth story with great illustrations for parents and children alike. If you don't have a children's Bible, I recommend The Beginner's Bible by Zonderkidz, My Very First Bible by Good Books, and The Osborne Children's Bible by Usborne Books.
- *Star of Wonder* by Leena Lane and Elena Baboni tells the story of Jesus' birth in 12 short chapters that could be read in one sitting or each individually. The illustrations are reminiscent of 16th and 17th Century Italy – magically beautiful.
- *Humphrey's First Christmas* by Carol Heyer follows Humphrey the camel as he takes the wise men to see the baby Jesus. With a little humor and whimsical artwork, this story emphasizes the true meaning of gift giving.

Kids Flip Wrapping Party

On Wednesday, December 9th, the children of Kids FLIP will join with other members of the congregation to help wrap presents for the DFCS Christmas Party. Children will meet in their regular room for FLIP but will be picked up in the Family Life Center Gym. Parents are encouraged to attend if available.

Children's Christmas Party

Mark your calendars for the special children's Christmas party on Wednesday, December 16th. All children will meet in the Fellowship Hall after dinner for a special time of crafts, games, and more to celebrate the Christmas season. Activities will take place from 6 – 7 p.m. and refreshments will be available from 7 – 7:30 p.m. We are asking parents to help with refreshments, so please bring something salty or sweet to share with everyone. Drinks will be provided. This will be the last Wednesday night meeting of the year. Dinner and programming will start back January 6th.

Walk Thru Bethlehem

On Sunday, December 13th, we will host our annual Walk Thru Bethlehem during the Sunday School hour. All children are asked to meet in the Youth Studio (below the chapel) where they will sign in and begin the journey. The Walk will travel down the children's hallway and finish in the Family Life Center Gym. All family members are welcome to attend the Walk as we journey with the shepherds in search of the baby Jesus.

If you are interested in serving as an actor or actress in this year's walk, please contact Kristin Heiden. All are welcome to participate!

Lessons and Carols

All children's choirs will be singing at the special Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, December 13th at 11 a.m. Please make plans to be in attendance for this beautiful joining of voices of all ages. Choir leaders will begin to gather their children following the Walk Thru Bethlehem that morning.

Advent Study with Kristin Heiden

"Can you imagine Christmas without singing Hark! The Herald Angles Sing?" This is the question Paul Chilcote poses at the outset of his Advent and Christmas devotional, *Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus*. Using the hymns of Charles Wesley, Hark included, and the biblical texts, Chilcote travels through this season of preparation and expectation leading his readers on a musical journey as we wait for the coming of the Christ child. Join Kristin Heiden on Monday evenings to travel with Chilcote and Wesley as we discover the wonders of the season through music, reflection, and prayer.

Monday 7 – 8 p.m., November 30 through January 4, Room TBA
Contact the church office to sign up. Cost is \$12 for the book.

Esther: It's Tough Being a Woman - beginning November 11

This study by Beth Moore looks at the Old Testament story of Esther as a profile in courage and contains many modern parallels for today's woman. Going up against heavyweights bent on her destruction, Esther trusted God and landed a blow that saved her people. Esther's destiny can be yours as you know more deeply the God who is in your corner. Facilitated by Page Ziobro.

Wednesday 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., November 11 – February 10
Contact the church office to sign up. Cost is \$17 for the book.

Offering Envelopes

Weekly offering envelopes for 2010 will be issued in December. If you currently do not have envelopes and would like a set, please contact the church office prior to December 15th.

Pictorial Directory

The new pictorial directories have arrived and can be picked up from the church office.

Announcements and Special Events

Living with Grief

The Stephen Ministry of our church is sponsoring 3 sessions on how to embrace life after loss, with Mickey Seigle as the facilitator. We will focus on practices that have helped others live life to the fullest following a loss. The sessions will occur on Monday mornings from 10 - 11:30 and Monday evenings from 6:30 - 8 in room A-40 of the Fellowship Hall. You can attend the morning or evening sessions, but you do not need to attend both. Everyone is welcome. If you have any questions you can contact Mickey Seigle at 770-461-6105. To register, please contact Laura Cox, 770-461-4313 or lcox@fayettevillefirst.com. There is no cost. Sessions will begin November 30 and go through December 14.

FFUMC Christmas Ornaments

Bethany Circle is selling FFUMC Christmas ornaments. They depict a rendering of our church in pewter and make a great keepsake gift for family and friends. Ornaments cost \$15 and will be available on Sunday mornings in the courtyard and at Wednesday night dinners in the Family Life Center. Proceeds go to local missions.

Titus II

Our Senior Adults invite you to join them for lunch at noon on Tuesday, December 1 in the Family Life Center Gym. Cost is \$6 for the meal of beef stroganoff, rice, green beans, garden salad, rolls, and coconut cake. The program this month is a concert by the Inman Elementary School Chorus. Call Sarah James, 770-461-9703, for reservations by Friday, November 27.

Advent 2009

Worship

Hanging of the Greens Service

November 29 -- The meaning of the symbols of Advent and Christmas are woven together with a musical service.

Children's Handbells

December 6, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Service of Lessons and Carols

December 13, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. (No 9:45 a.m. service; all children sing at 11 a.m.)

The service tells the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of a messiah, and the birth of Jesus through music and readings from scripture.

Christmas Eve Services

December 24, 4 p.m., 6 p.m., 11 p.m.

Celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ through the word and music.

Gather

Candlelight Concert

December 20, 6 p.m.

Sonia Squires, violin and Rick Massengale, piano present their annual Christmas concert featuring many other musicians and guest vocalists.

Christmas Tour of Homes

December 5 and 6, 1 – 5 p.m.

Visit six beautiful homes in Fayette County all decked out for Christmas. The cost is \$15 with the proceeds going to Square Foot Ministries to complete the work on the Fayette Counseling Center. Parking attendants will be available at each home but you are encouraged to use the church parking lots and either carpool or ride the church bus for \$2. Reserve your spot now.

On Sunday, December 6, a delicious lunch will be served in the Family Life Center from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations will be accepted. Beautiful theme baskets will be available for purchase during a silent auction. Come out and enjoy a fun weekend while supporting a great cause!

Serve

Shoebox Mission Project

This holiday season, we will again be putting together shoeboxes for the children of Fayette County DFCS. Instead of accepting donations of individual items, this year we ask each family or individual to pick up a shoebox and fill it with the items requested. The shoeboxes are available for pickup from the Welcome Center. Inside the box is a label with the child's age and gender. Using that information, fill the box with simple toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.) as well as cold weather accessories (mittens, hat, scarf, etc.) Feel free to wrap the box as you see fit, allowing the lid to still be removed. Completed boxes can be returned to the Welcome Center by Sunday, December 6th. We had wonderful success with our Shoebox Project last year, and hope to continue to provide care for children in transition. Please contact Kristin Heiden with any questions.

Angel Tree

We will have the Angel Tree ready November 22. You can sponsor one child or your small group can sponsor many children. You will get a chance to see who is on the list and sponsor as you feel called. You will play a huge role in helping provide Christmas for these children.

Christmas Gift Certificates

Certificates can be purchased at the store of your choice and in the increment of your choice. Each year we have children that are not sponsored from the Angel Tree. We use the gift certificates that are collected to help sponsor those children. Any left over certificates are used to help families throughout the year as they express need to the church office.

DFCS Christmas Party

This Christmas party will be held on December 13 for Fayette County foster children. The Cornerstone and Genesis classes help make the party happen. Children that attend receive one \$15 gift at the party. Donations are greatly appreciated to go towards purchasing these gifts. We have averaged 58 children over the past four years. Contact Len Gough with any questions or donation information.

December @ Fayetteville First UMC

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 Eucharist for normal schedule Christmas Tour of Homes Lunch: 11 Christmas Tour of Homes: 1 AA: 3 Financial Peace: 4:30	7 Kindermusik: 9:30-12 Body Recall: 10:30 Walking Group: 1 Advent Study: 7 Alanon: 8	8 Walking Group: 1 Seasoned Singers: 1:30 Shaw! Ministry: 5:30 UMW Board Meeting: 6:30	9 Body Recall: 10:30 Kindermusik: 10:30-1 8th Period: 3:30 Children's Christmas: 6:30 Eucharist: 6:30 AA: 8	10 Walking Group: 1 Fellowship/Discipleship S.S. Class Christmas Party: 6 Srt. Ft. Ministries: 6:30 AA: 8	11 Body Recall: 10:30 Walking Group: 1 AA: 7	12 Lighthouse S.S. Class Christmas Party: 5 AA: 8
13 (See left for normal schedule) DFCS Christmas Party: 2 AA: 3 Youth Christmas Party: 6	14 Walking Group: 1 Advent Study: 7 Alanon: 8	15 Shaw! Ministry: 5:30 Walking Group: 1 Seasoned Singers: 1:30 Srt. Ft. Ministries: 6:30	16 8th Period: 3:30 Children's Christmas: 6:30 Eucharist: 6:30 Cancer Support Group: 6:30 AA: 8	17 Intercessory Prayer: 12 Walking Group: 1 AA: 8	18 Walking Group: 1 AA: 7	19 AA: 8
20 (See left for normal schedule) Concert - Rick & Sonia: 6	21 Walking Group: 1 Advent Study: 7 AA: 8 Alanon: 8	22 Walking Group: 1 Seasoned Singers: 1:30	23 No Regular Programs AA: 8	24 Christmas Eve Office Closed Christmas Eve Services: 4, 6, 11 AA: 8	25 Christmas Day Office Closed AA: 7	26 AA: 8
27 (See left for normal schedule) AA: 3 No Youth Evening Activities	28 Walking Group: 1 Advent Study: 7 AA: 8 Alanon: 8	29 Walking Group: 1	30 No Regular Programs AA: 8	31 New Year's Eve Office Closed AA: 8		

Normal Sunday Schedule

- Choir Practice: 7:50
- Worship in Sanctuary: 8:30
- Wonders of Worship: 8:30
- Sunday School: 9:40
- Worship in Chapel: 9:45
- Orchestra Practice: 10
- Choir Practice: 10:15
- Worship in Sanctuary: 11
- Wonders of Worship: 11
- Worship Team Rehearsal: 2
- Open Court Basketball: 2
- Journey Bible Study @ it's a Grind: 6

Normal Wednesday Schedule

- Genesis Youth Choir: 5
- Wed. Night Dinner: 5:15
- Joyful Noise Choir: 6
- Melody Choir: 6
- Sonshine Choir: 6
- 1/99 Mid. & HS: 6
- Discovery Club: 6:30
- Bells: 6:30
- Chimes: 6:30
- YOGA: 6:30
- Solomon's Porch: 7pm
- FLIP: 7
- Chancel Choir: 7:30