



The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

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The Wonder Of It All!

This season of Advent leading up to Christmas has often been called a time of wonder. Everything seems exciting and refreshing. We talk about the look of wonder in the eyes of a child... the star of wonder... the baby in the manger as a wonder to behold.

I wonder a lot of things at Christmas... I wonder

what Mary and Joseph were really thinking about being chosen by God. I wonder if the shepherds had any clue about who they were visiting in a stable that night. I wonder if anyone was there to help Mary give birth.

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Christmas Eve Worship

9am: Family Contemporary Service

- Christmas stories with Erica & Rev. Carissa
- Christmas Carols led by our Worship Bands
- Relaxed for our youngest worshippers

11am: Family Christmas Pageant

- Christmas pageant with our 2nd graders
- Traditional Christmas Carols
- Brief Christmas message by Rev. Lee

Sunday School Art Show in Fellowship Hall between our two family services.

5pm: Family Traditional Service

- Special Christmas story time for kids
- Traditional Christmas Carols
- Brief Christmas message by Rev. Ron

7pm: Contemporary Christmas Service

- Christmas Carols led by our Worship Bands
- Candlelighting
- Christmas Message by Rev. Carissa

9pm: Traditional Christmas Service

- Music by Brass Quintet, Bells, & Choir
- Carols & Candlelighting
- Christmas Message by Rev. Ron

11pm: Traditional Christmas Service

- Music by Brass Quintet, Bells, & Choir
- Holy Communion & Candlelighting
- Christmas Message by Rev. Byron

Advent Studies

Christmas Gifts That Won't Break

A study by James Moore that coincides with the four candles of the Advent wreath: hope, love, joy, and peace, led by Dick Legare and Nancy Landers. *Sundays at 9:30am. December 3, 10, & 17.*

Down to Earth

A challenge by Mike Slaughter & Rachel Billups to respond during Advent with down-to-earth love, humility, lifestyle, and obedience.

Mondays at 7pm. December 4, 11, & 18.
Led by Rev. Lee Ferrell.

Tuesdays at 7pm. December 5, 12, & 19.
Led by Rev. Ron Foster.

Awaiting the Already

By Magrey deVega. See how each gospel prepares us for Christmas, led by Chip Linehan. *Wednesdays at 7pm. November 29, December 6, 13, & 20.*

A Biblical Look at Advent

Explore: Waiting for Savior, The Savior Comes, and Living in Hope, led by Rev. Byron Brought. *Wednesdays at 11am. December 6, 13, & 20.*

Advent Devotional

We're providing an Advent Devotional for your own personal preparation. Pick up a copy of Pauses for Advent: Words of Wonder by Trevor Hudson and prepare your heart for Christmas!

Advent LIVE

Are you a young adult or part of a young family who has a tough time getting to church for a study? Join us in **Advent LIVE**, a new small group experience exploring what it means to #choosekind for Advent, led by Erica and Rev. Carissa. We use Facebook Live videos on Mondays and Thursdays at 12:30pm, but you can be part of the experience whenever you're able to tune in. We've already begun, but we'd love to have you join us! Visit tinyurl.com/AdventLIVE and click "join" to jump in. Questions? Contact Rev. Carissa. csurber@severnaparkumc.org

The Wonder Of It All! (continued)

I wonder how the wise men knew to follow that star. And I've always wondered how a fat guy named Santa gets down narrow chimneys!

But WONDER is more than asking questions about what we don't know. Wonder is a beautiful feeling of astonishment mixed with admiration. It involves a bit of the mysterious; we wonder at that which we do not fully understand but which fascinates us deeply. Isn't that what faith is? Trust in something we feel sure of but cannot prove. The fact that so many aspects of our faith, and specifically of the Christmas story, create a sense of wonder is one of the best parts of believing. God constantly surprises us, delights us, and gives us joy!

This Advent, take time to be amazed. Treat the story as if you have never heard it before and let yourself be lost in wonder at both the greatness and the simplicity of it all. Our story is one of the greatest and most beautiful in the world; let it fill your heart and soul once again.

Have a meaningful Advent!

Rev. Lee

Fellowship Clubs Christmas Celebration

The Fellowship Clubs are perking along now, and we want to remind everyone to save the date for our Christmas celebration together on **Saturday, December 16, 5-7pm**. Buck and Gwyn Linthicum are hosting at their home this year. We'll provide the main dish and members will bring side dishes and desserts. Please RSVP so we'll know you are planning to attend. This gathering is adults-only, but we can help to arrange for child care if needed.

Yes, we'll have the traditional optional gift exchange. Folks who want to bring a wrapped gift (or re-gift!) will join in the fun as gifts are opened and change hands in unpredictable ways. If buying a gift, we suggest limiting to under \$20. (No, Gwyn, the pink swan hat is just too precious to contribute to the gift exchange.)



Annual Ladies Christmas Tea

December 10, 2017
1:30-3:30pm
Fellowship Hall
\$10/ticket

Tickets are sold in Fellowship Hall. Get yours early to ensure you are not disappointed. You can also sign up to host and decorate a table. Invite your friends to join you!



Blue Christmas

The Christmas Season can be a hard time for people dealing with grief or loss. You are invited to a service of healing and hope on Sunday, December 10 at 4pm in the sanctuary. Through music and prayer we will reflectively celebrate Emmanuel, God with us.

Wonder

Advent Theme

Wonder is a response that shows up again and again in the stories of Advent and Christmas and it's our theme for the season here at SPUMC. Join us for worship throughout the month of December as we see Zechariah struck silent by wonder, witness Mary & Elizabeth wondering what God is up to, hear Mary's wonderful song about God's revolution of love, and wonder as we wander to Bethlehem with the shepherds.

Sunday Morning Worship

Join us in worship at **8, 9:30, & 11am**.

December 3: Zechariah

December 10: Elizabeth

December 17: Wonder Woman Mary

December 24 (Morning): Shepherds

Worship services 9 & 11am

December 24 (Evening): The Christmas Story. *Worship services at 5, 7, 9 & 11pm*

Carols, Cookies, & Crafts

Carols, Cookies, and Crafts is a gathering for families tonight, **Sunday, December 3** from **4-6pm**. Join us as we sing sacred and secular carols, decorate cookies, build gingerbread houses, & make

ornaments for the Christmas trees at church and your home. Bring hors d'oeuvres or cookies to share. Be sure to invite your neighbors and friends!

Heaven's Kitchen

On **Saturday, December 23**, volunteers and guests will gather for a special Christmas meal at Heaven's Kitchen (our meal ministry in Brooklyn, MD). We need all the help we can get to make this meal hospitable, grace-filled, and tasty. If you would like to volunteer, contact Chip. boxsman@aol.com

Reverse Advent Calendar

Grab a SPAN (Serving People Across Neighborhoods) tote bag and put one food item in it each day of Advent. Return the bag on Christmas Eve or the following Sunday. The bags will supply SPAN's food pantry. Contact Francie for more information. fas925@gmail.com

ALL December Lunch

"Voices in Melody," a talented chorus of Anne Arundel Retired School Personnel (AARSPA) will be back to entertain Adults Loving Life (ALL). Join us for fellowship at **12noon** on **December 5**, lunch at 12:30, and wonderful holiday music by AARSPA.

Advent Giving Tree

Our annual tree of giving is up in our Fellowship Hall! Each ornament on the tree represents a need from one of our church mission projects. This year, our church has adopted 15 families through the Salvation Army, giving us the chance to brighten Christmas for 31 children. You also choose to give through our Backpack Buddies ministry or Heaven's Kitchen, provide gifts for children with parents in prison, and more. This is a great opportunity for your family to #choosekind this Advent season!

Intentional Acts of Kindness

Thanks to the generosity of one of the families of our church, we will be giving away one hundred (it just doubled!) one-hundred dollar bills in church this coming Sunday — really! All you have to do, in turn, is give it away, all at once or in several places where it is needed. What we are asking you to do is to a) be intentional about your generosity and b) share the story with us about what you did. Will you be one of the hundred to participate in our Intentional Acts of Kindness Project this Advent?

Winter Relief Thanks

We would like to thank the 300+ volunteers that participated in Winter Relief and put in over 1300 hours to make the Winter Relief week a success. We not only provided 49 guests a place to sleep, meals & snacks, laundry services, sewing repairs, showers, and transportation to jobs, but were able to provide dental and barber services and

a goody bag to each guest. Our friends played bingo, were entertained by our very own Chris Dillard on guitar, attended a Bible study led by Nancy Landers, attended an employment networking session led by Sean Wise, and enjoyed the singing of our youth group. One of the highlights of the week was the Saturday night bonfire over at Deb Harden's.

But Winter Relief goes way beyond this. I think it was summed up perfectly by several of our guests who stated "You welcomed us in and made this our home." What truly warmed my heart was that two guests gave away the gift cards they received to those even less fortunate than themselves.

Our volunteers served with their hands, feet, hearts, and time, and loved our guests as Jesus loves them. This is what Winter Relief is all about. Not only were the guests blessed in many ways, but our church was blessed. If you did not get a chance to participate in the Winter Relief Mission this November, consider getting involved in the next week of Winter Relief: **February 5–12, 2018**. Please keep all of our homeless neighbors in your prayers.

Thank you,

Carolyn Heim & Pam Sherman



UMYF News

Sunday, Dec. 3, 4pm — Helping with Carols, Cookies and Crafts.

7pm — Regular program, “Words!”

Sunday, Dec. 10, 7pm — “The Real Meaning of Christmas”

Sunday, Dec. 17, 7pm — Christmas Party

- Come dressed in Christmas Colors and/or your Ugly Christmas Sweater
- Christmas Cookie Bake-Off...if you choose to enter, bring 2 dozen of your specialty! (Homemade, not Safeway) Cookie decorating, food, maybe games

Sunday, Dec. 24 — NO MEETING, come to worship.

Sunday, Dec. 31 — NO MEETING, happy New Year!

Young Adult Group (YAG)

SPUMC's young adult group is getting together for a Christmas Cookie Extravaganza on **Wednesday, December 13, 6:30-8pm**. Join us for a night of fellowship, frosting, and your favorite Christmas movies! Childcare will be provided. RSVP at tinyurl.com/YAGmas or text Rev. Carissa at 410.983.3507.

I'm IN! Finish Line

It's not too late for you to be ALL IN! If you haven't turned in your 2018 pledge card yet, you can still mail it in, bring it by the office or drop it in the offering plate or box at the Welcome Desk. Many thanks to everyone who already has made or will make a commitment to worship, study, serve and support our church financially in the coming year. And

we are counting on everyone to help us finish this year strong by fulfilling your 2017 pledge and/or making “above and beyond” gifts by check, online or by stock donations. We are grateful for your continued generosity!

SPUMC Choir Sings at Carnegie Hall

What an amazing and inspiring time the choir had in NYC! It was such an honor to represent our church at such a grand stage as, Carnegie Hall. I was proud of all of our singers, and the performance was stunning! I can't wait to receive the DVD so that we can share this wonderful musical experience with all of you.

I would also like to take the time to personally thank you all for your gifts, prayers, and support in making this trip such a memorable experience for our choristers and me. Thank you so much to those who even travelled all the way to NYC to see us perform. We hope that this is one of many more opportunities to extend SPUMC music ministry's outreach into the community. From the bottom of our hearts...THANK YOU!

Peace and love,

Chris Dillard



Beal Family Update

Dear SPUMC,

Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support. Your partnership truly enables the work that we do. We wanted to take a minute to update you on what's been going on in our lives.

Since July, Heather has been teaching a course on Field Methods, where students apply their linguistics training to real life situations. They work with a speaker of a foreign language (Russian, Swahili, or Waray—a Philippino language), gathering as much language data as they can. During this time, they also organize and analyze their data. Finally, they compile descriptions of the Phonology system (how sounds form words) and the Grammar system (how words form sentences) of their target language. This class helps students see what they can do in real language situations. Her students will move on to eventually work in Russia, Asia, Africa, Mexico and the Pacific. It's exciting to play a small part in the Bible Translation process in so many different areas of the world!

At the end of August, Bruce wrapped up the K5 Summer Program for elementary aged kids (missionary kids, students' kids, and local kids from ages 6 to 12). He shared Jesus with them and ministered to the unique needs of missionary children. It was a busy summer but everyone had a good time and learned from one another.

So, what's next? The most exciting change is that Heather has been asked to develop a new course that will train people in Oral Bible Translation. There

are societies so completely oral, that while they can be taught to read and write, it does not communicate with their heart. How can these groups learn about God and have a reference that is meaningful without resorting to changing their entire culture and mindset? One means that is effective is providing a Bible translation in an oral format—it's not just reading something that has been written, it's translating the Bible orally, which is then provided to the people in a digital format. It's an exciting new field and there are finally some resources and software programs that have been developed to meet this need.

Several of you have asked about the kids. They are doing great in Texas! We continue to homeschool them. In the summer they enjoyed cooling off in the center's pool, but now the pool here will be closed for the cooler season. Both kids are involved in the Missionary Kids Youth Group located here on the center, where they get to meet and hang out with other kids whose lives are as "weird" as theirs!

We appreciate you!

In His Service,

Bruce and Heather Beal



The Wonder Of It All!



VIM @ UMCOR West

Hope and I were blessed to join our first VIM trip with 22 folks to support the western distribution center for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) in Salt Lake City. Our VIM team is famous there because of the distance we travel for this mission. Brian Diggs, the director of the site, mentions us in his greeting to each volunteer group. Volunteers are the key to UMCOR's success. Besides Brian and Micah, who manages the warehouse, the daily preparation depends on VIM-type teams.

There was a sewing team who made 26 warming wraps during the week. Another team sorted two truckloads of donated supplies: school bags, supplies for newborns, and health kits. The team then packed over 7,000 health kits. 63,000 of these kits are going to Houston, Florida, Puerto Rico and Ukraine. Each kit is individually packed. We touched people locally and globally.

Besides hard work we enjoyed great fellowship and deepened friendships. We prepared and ate meals together. We worshiped and prayed with and for each other daily. We played games together so there was a lot of laughter. We prayed over and sent each pallet and wrap with love as we completed it. We were touched by Jesus on this mission and all the love he surrounds us with. Brian is a fantastic witness and we enjoyed many insightful testimonies during the week from him and Micah. We concluded the week with a communion service celebrating together why we are called to mission under the name of Jesus. We are his hands and feet and most importantly his heart. If you've never been part of a VIM team, maybe 2018 is the year for you. We'll keep you posted on the multiple opportunities to serve that we are planning.

Chip Linehan

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