



The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

Contents

100+ Acts of Kindness	1
Flood Buckets	2
Winter Relief	2
Worship Training	2
Connections & Baptism Classes	2
Young Adult Group	3
Spark Kids	3
Financial Planning	3
Moms Book Group	3
Longest Night Vigil	4
Thank You, Angels!	4
Bah, Humbug	4
December Photos	5
Christmas Eve Photos	6
Women's Bible Study	8
Picture Month	8
Women's Retreat	8
UMYF	10
December Grads	10
2018 Confirmation	10
Conversations About Race	10
BWC Scholarship	11
ALL Lunch	11
Never Alone	11
Saints & Sinners	11
Beal Thanks	11
Nursery School Registration	11
VBS Save the Date	11



100+ Acts of Kindness

I had the best seat in the house.

As the staff person who was helping to shepherd the Intentional Acts of Kindness Project through Advent and Christmas, one of my privileged tasks was to take all the stories that were coming in by email and post them on the website.

No sooner had we given out the \$10,000 in 100 dollar bills on December

3rd, when the stories started pouring in within a day:

- I'm reaching out to a friend going through a horrible divorce.

- We're using our \$100 to help a child with an inoperable brain tumor.

- I added my own money and bought \$275 worth of food and supplies for the animal shelter.

(continued on page 8)

Flood Buckets!

Severna Park UMC is taking on a project to answer the call for help in our community. We will be assembling 250 cleaning supply buckets that will be donated to victims who have experienced catastrophic loss in their lives in one morning on **Sunday, January 14**.

Mission Central, in Mechanicsburg, PA is the mid-Atlantic hub for the United Methodist Committee on Relief which stores and distributes relief supplies to victims of natural disasters. Generally, Mission Central keeps a supply “on hand” in anticipation of future needs. Unfortunately, Florida and Texas experienced devastating storms and flooding this summer and Mission Central shipped several tractor trailer truckloads of cleaning buckets in response to the call for help.

The Volunteers in Mission will be purchasing the supplies for the cleaning buckets, but we need your help! Can you and your family stop by Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, January 14** before or after you attend service and help by assembling one bucket for us? We can pack these buckets in record time and have them ready to ship on Monday morning!

Winter Relief Mission

On **February 5-12** our church will host Winter Relief, a mission where we house 45 homeless men and women for an entire week. We offer shelter, meals, showers, laundry, warm fellowship and most importantly the love of God to these men and women. There are many ways you can be involved such as serving

as a host volunteer (working directly with the guests), helping with meals, transportation, laundry, activities and much more. Sign up in Fellowship Hall or online. It takes 300 volunteers to run this mission. Please consider serving during this very important week.

If you have any questions you can contact Carolyn Heim at 410-987-4924. severnaparkumc.org/wrsignup

Worship Training

Have you ever wanted to help lead worship? Or do you want to gain more skills for your current role in worship? You're invited to join us for a worship training from **12-2pm** on **Sunday, January 21**. We'll learn over lunch and then break into small groups to learn more about how to serve as an usher, service leader, scripture leader, worship leader, and more. All ages welcome! RSVP to Rev. Carissa by **January 16**, so we can have enough food for all. carissa@severnaparkumc.org

Connections & Baptisms

If you're ready to join our church or just want to know more about SPUMC, you're invited to attend a Connections Class on **Sunday, January 14** at **11am** in the Parlor with one of our pastors. We'll talk about our mission - *Love. Serve. Follow.* - and introduce you to some of our ministries.

If you are interested in having a child baptized at SPUMC, please join us in the Parlor on **January 21** at **11am** to learn what this sacrament is all about.

bfrank@severnaparkumc.org

Young Adult Group (YAG)

SPUMC's young adults are gathering for study & service this winter! If you're in your 20s or 30s, we hope you'll join us:

- **Wednesday, January 10** in the Parlor: "How Can I Have Faith?" discussion, **6:30-8pm**
- **Thursday, January 18** in Fellowship Hall: "Financial Management for Young Adults and Families" from **6:30-8pm** – a joint night of learning with Moms Connect and Alexis Lecouras, financial planner and SPUMC member
- **Wednesday, January 24** in Parlor: "Why and How Do I Pray?" discussion **6:30-8pm**
- **Wednesday, February 7** in Fellowship Hall: serve with Winter Relief, **4-7:30pm**

Childcare is always provided, and all are welcome. Text **YAG** to 410-983-3507 to get updates on more activities, or email Rev. Carissa for more info: carissa@severnaparkumc.org

Spark Kids

We're planning a fun evening class for children 2nd-5th grade on **Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30pm**. Registration by **January 28** required via email. Commit to one month or all three! Email Erica for more. ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org

February: Maker Fun Factory (more fun from VBS 2017)

March: Spiritual Practices

April: Shipwrecked (preview of VBS 2018)

Financial Planning for Young Adults & Families

Young adults and families are welcome to join the Moms Connect group on **January 18** from **6:30-8pm** for an evening with Alexis Lecouras, a financial planner and member of SPUMC. He will present information and answer questions that pertain to young adults and families such as debt management, beginning to save for retirement, saving enough for retirement, establishing college savings accounts, preparing for a rainy day, and saving for large purchases/trips/dreams. Childcare will be provided. To help guide the discussion, email your questions to Erica in advance: erica@severnaparkumc.org

Moms Book Group

Moms Connect is a semi-monthly gathering of moms who desire to connect with one another, grow in their faith, and form a community of care and support. All moms of all stages of motherhood are welcome. The group gathers the first and third Thursdays of each month. Childcare is provided.

We are beginning a new book group in January. It will also be on Thursdays, 6:30pm beginning January 11. Our book is *Present Over Perfect*.

For more information contact moms@severnaparkumc.org. Text "Mom" to 410-983-3507 to get updates.

Longest Night Vigil

Sponsored by the Arundel House of Hope, Light House, Sarah's House and Catholic Charities, the **Longest Night Vigil** gathering drew over 250 people on December 21 at Lawyer's Square in Annapolis. Prayers and psalms were spoken, songs sung, and the names of the 24 homeless persons who died over the past year in Anne Arundel County were read. Leaders and members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith communities were all in attendance.

Secretary of the Anne Arundel and Annapolis Coalition to End Homelessness, Rev. Ryan Sirmons, greeted the crowd with a simple proclamation: "Our job is to make sure we no longer have to have this service. Our job is to make sure we work together, that we use the resources — public, private and voluntary — to make sure there is no more homelessness in this county or in this city." Until that time we will continue to show compassion and offer radical hospitality through our Winter Relief program. Your next chance to serve these guests is **February 5-12** (see related article on page 2 for more).



Thanks you, Angels!

A huge thanks to everyone who gave gifts through our Advent Angel Tree this Christmas. With your help, our church fulfilled and exceeded all 516 requests (a record number!), showing abundant generosity in our local community and across the nation.

A Bah-Humbug Moment

Amidst all of the joy of the Advent season here at SPUMC, we had a bit of a Bah-Humbug moment, too. When the worship team arrived to rehearse just days before Christmas, they discovered that the computer "heart" of the electronic drum set had been stolen in the previous 24 hours. It was clearly someone who knew what they were looking for (they left a number of other valuable things) and the loss was not insignificant – about \$1500. Fortunately, one of our drummers was able to purchase another one (it was part of his drum kit, not the church's) and it arrived in 2 days and ready for Christmas Eve (it will stay locked away from now on). If anyone would like to help defray the cost of this unwelcome and unexpected expense, write "drums" on the memo section of your check or online donation. Thanks.

December Events Photos



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Christmas Eve Worship





Women's Bible Study

The daytime Bible Study will resume **January 17, 9:30-11am**. The next study is "Lord, Teach Me to Pray in 28 Days," and will run for 4 weeks, through February 7.

Childcare is available; Susan Brunk is the teacher. All women are welcome!



Picture Month

February will be "Picture Month" at SPUMC. We'll be looking to get to know and connect with each other in some creative ways. Stay tuned for more details.

Spring Women's Retreat: Early Bird Registration

It's cold now, but we're already thinking about spring! Join us for the 9th Annual Women's Retreat on **April 6-8**. We'll spend the weekend together, singing, praying, and exploring the beautiful mountains of Skycroft Conference Center in Middletown Maryland. This year we are also offering a **1-day option** for moms who just want to get away for the day. Come relax and be refreshed by a weekend on the mountaintop! Contact Dawn to sign up today. dcullis@severnaparkumc.org

Early Bird Registration: \$140
by January 31

One Day Registration: \$50 +
\$25/child over age 2
by January 31

Regular Registration: \$160
by February 25



100+ Acts (continued)

- A friend and I matched the money and decided to throw a pizza party for some homeless folks who were hanging out on some church steps in Baltimore.

- I felt led to give it to our waitress.

The variety of situations was great and the compassion ran deep.

So many people shared with me the prayerful process they went through as they tried to discern how best to use this remarkable gift. Others described themselves as being on "high alert," eagerly looking for an opportunity to add a blessing to someone's life. More than half of the participants decided to match the original \$100 and turn it into \$200 or more. Almost everyone talked about becoming more sensitive to the needs that are around them every day.

I shared this project and the growing number of posts on our website with Melissa Lauber from our Conference Communications Office and she wrote a great story which was featured on the BWC website in the lead-up to Christmas. The *Capital Gazette* had three of our

youth lighting the Advent wreath on the front page of their Christmas day edition and we also made page 2 of the *Baltimore Sun* that same morning. Our own Leslie Dolsak wrote a delightful piece for *Eye on Annapolis* and the *SP Voice* (which should be out this week).

But the thing that put our story on the national radar, was a story by Julie Zauzmer (who I later discovered was the daughter of a college friend of mine) that appeared on the front page of Metro Section of the *Washington Post* on December 23, accompanied by **Kennedy & Hannah Beam** shopping with their mom for toys for sick children at Johns Hopkins. The AP picked it up and our Hundred Acts of Kindness spread all over the country in hundreds of papers from big (Chicago Tribune, LA Times, Charlotte Observer) to small (SPUMCers talked about family members seeing it in their local papers in Pennsylvania, California, and Oklahoma).

Every time our story rippled farther outward, I shared the links with the donor family who helped set this whole wave of generosity in motion. We were all giddy with delight, because what we had hoped would unfold did -- but in a more joyful and bigger way than we could have ever imagined. Blessings multiplied out in every direction because of the compassion and creativity of all of our participants (some of whom opted in with their own \$100 having not gotten one of the original hundred that were handed out). And the good news just kept spreading.

I suppose if this was SPUMC's "15 Minutes of Fame," it's not a bad thing to have made a name for ourselves because of these acts of kindness, compassion

and generosity. I have little doubt that this will inspire others to do similar things in their churches and communities (in fact, I received a \$100 bill in the mail this week from a woman who read about our story in the Sun and reached out to a college counseling service with a similar gift).

I came away from the experience deeply convicted that this should not be a one-time thing (and our **Intentional Acts of Kindness Project** won't be – the donors have already committed \$10,000 for next year!) and that we should do something so big and bold and loving in the name of Jesus every year that is worthy of us making the local and maybe even national news. Not for the attention or "fame." Not so we can pat ourselves on the backs. But just so that the love of Christ is made so real in people's lives through your acts of generosity and grace that others can't help but notice. And the story can't stay contained.

May your New Year be full of kindness at every turn!

Rev. Ron



UMYF News

Sunday, January 14

- 7pm, Program night
- 8:40pm, ICUs Begin

Sunday, January 21

- 7pm, Program night
- 8:40pm, ICUs

Sunday, January 28

- 7pm, Group Building Night
- 8:40pm, ICUs

Sunday, February 4 Morning

- Collect for Souper Bowl of Caring
- No evening meeting

December Graduates

Sincere congratulations to our young adults who graduated this December!

Mike Cherowitzo: BA in International Communications from Penn State

Sarah Davis: Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling from McDaniel College

Janey Dike: Master of Professional Studies in Clinical Psychological Science from University of Maryland, College Park

Caroline Johnson: Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Nursing Education, from Towson University

Jim Perritt: Master of Science in Nursing with a focus in Psychiatric Nurse Practitioning from University of South Alabama

2018 Confirmation Class

Confirmation will start with an orientation for 7th-8th graders on **January 9** at **7pm**. All youth interested (and at least one parent) should attend. Classes are on **Tuesdays** at **4:30pm** beginning **January 23**. Contact Rev. Lee for more information.

lferrell@severnaparkumc.org



Difficult Conversations About Race Workshop

God calls us to love all people with the generous spirit of Christ, listening deeply and speaking honestly. But how do you respond when someone makes a snide remark that seems to be about race?

Join us on **February 11** from **2-5pm** as we host a workshop and training called “Having Difficult Conversations About Race.” Participants will learn techniques to navigate difficult moments and topics while remaining assertive, empathetic, and calm. Through games, role-playing, and observation, we’ll practice conversation techniques and develop a personal plan for daily life.

This workshop is facilitated by Latisha Jones in partnership with WISE and NAACP of Anne Arundel County. A \$10 donation is requested to attend. Email Rev. Carissa by **February 4** if you’d like to attend. Space is limited.

csurber@severnaparkumc.org

BW Conference Scholarship

The Baltimore-Washington Conference will once again be offering college scholarships for the Fall 2018 semester. Students can apply January 3–March 7, 2018 through an online application system. Scholarships are available to students attending or enrolling in accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Students must be an active member of a church for at least one year and be attending (or will attend) an accredited college or university within the United States full-time. Students will need to provide their official transcript (high school or college) and contact information for two church references (pastor and another member of the church). In addition, the student must have a minimum GPA of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

For additional information and to apply, visit severnaparkumc.org/bwcscholarship

January ALL Luncheon

Adults Loving Life starts 2018 with our own Rev. Ron as our guest speaker. We all know what fantastic pictures he takes, especially of people, and he'll share a few of his favorite images and connections he's found between praying and making photographs. Sign up in the Fellowship Hall if you can join us at **12noon** on **January 23** for fellowship followed by lunch at **12:30pm**.



Never Alone Cancer Support

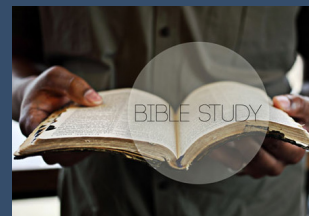
Our cancer support group is adding an afternoon session to their schedule beginning in January 2018. They're also now doing one-on-one counseling. Contact the church office for more information.

January 9, 2pm in the Parlor

January 16, 7pm in the Parlor

Saints & Sinners Class

There will be a new 4-week Bible Study on Ephesians beginning on **January 14** in room **302**, currently known as the Saints & Sinners Class. Open to all adults. Look for the books in Fellowship Hall. **Sundays, 9:30-10:30am**



Beal Thanks

Thank you so much to those of you who contributed gift cards in our name to the Christmas giving tree. We are overwhelmed by your generosity and truly blessed by your loving care for us! May the Lord bless and keep you! - *Heather and Bruce Beal*



SPUMC Nursery School Registration

Are you looking for an outstanding and caring place for your child to attend pre-school? Registration for current students and church families for the 2018-2019 school year will begin on January 23 at 10am. Visit the website or call the Nursery School office for class schedules, tuition information, to schedule a tour and more. severnaparkumc.org/nursery-school or 410.987.8339

VBS Save the Date

July 9-13 and 16-20, 2018

Registration for volunteers is March 19, for church members is April 9, and for community members is April 16. Links will be posted in spring 2018.



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