



Love in Action

The Newsletter of Maggie Valley United Methodist Church

Volume 16, Issue 12

December, 2023

FROM PASTOR MIKE...

Advent – The Coming of the King!

Advent is to be understood in three ways. First, a little over 2000 years ago, Christ came into the world on the first holy Christmas Eve. On the first Sunday of Advent by singing together, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and Ransom Captive Israel". We'll remember the pathos and brokenness of the Hebrew people as they waited for the coming of the Messiah. But thank God he came! We were in darkness but as John in his prologue puts it, the Word which was from the beginning became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. He was the light..." We'll give thanks for the light Christmas Eve as we lift our candles and sing "Silent Night".

Advent also emphasizes Christ's second coming. The One who came in Bethlehem as a small child promises us that he will come again as Lord. In God's way and in God's timing, Christ will reign over our broken world. Wrongs will be righted! Phoniness will be replaced with integrity and as Christ reigns, peace will reign or all! John's Revelation (the last book in our Bible) teaches us that people from every kingdom, nation, and tribe will gather and worship the Christ!

The third focus of Advent is the in between time. That's where we live now, in between the first and second coming. In a sense, God's church is always in that "in between time"; that time "in between" the first coming of Christ and the culmination of all history when Christ reigns! It's in this time of waiting that we participate with Christ in being agents of healing in our world.

I'm honored to share this journey through Advent with you. I look forward to the beginning of that journey of Advent this coming Sunday morning.

Mike Shirley

December 21st 5:30pm
Blue Christmas

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

December 24th 10:30am
Carols

December 24th 5pm
Carols, Communion, Candlelight

The Longest Night/Blue Christmas

Service of Healing and Hope

Thursday, December 21, 5:30 PM

The loss of a loved one, broken relationships, life transitions, physical illness—so many things can make it difficult to share in Christmas cheer. Yet, part of the wonder of Christmas is that God chooses to be with us in our pain. Join us for this time of quiet, reflective worship as we seek God’s peace and light in the darkness.



BELINDA MARR, TREASURER’S REPORT...

Monthly Financial Report for October 2023

October	
Needed for Budget	\$ 23,882.98
Expenses	\$ 18,501.35
Offerings	\$ 28,179.06
Over/Under	\$ 9,677.71



Treasurer Report

ANNOUNCEMENTS...

Our Church Food Pantry operates on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 am until noon. We are asking that everyone in the congregation **bring BAR SOAP, SHAMPOO, RAMEN NOODLES, GRITS/Pkgs, BAR SOAP, TOOTHBRUSHES/TOOTHPASTE, FRUIT GRANOLA BARS, INSTANT OATMEAL, CRACKERS, and COOKIES this month.** Personal hygiene items are appreciated also. Thank you for helping!

MVUMC Women December Meeting: Come and join us for an hour of fun, food, and fellowship. Our women's group will hold its last meeting of 2023 on Thursday, Dec. 7th from 2-3pm. We would love to have a record number of attendees. If you are interested, please bring a \$5-10 wrapped gift and a finger food. If you have any questions, please see Jan Wagner or Beverly Ketner.

The One Board will meet on Tuesday, December 5th and Tuesday, December 12th at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

All "Love in Action" articles for January are due to Belinda by Thursday, December 14th.

The Men's Group WILL meet on Thursday, December 14th at 5:30 and will have the Men's breakfast on Saturday, December 16th at 8:00am in the fellowship hall. All men are invited.

We will have a wrapping day and fellowship on Saturday, December 16th at 10:00am in the fellowship hall. We will be wrapping gifts for McCracken Nursing Home, Angel Tree, and Pathways. Please join us if you are able.

We will have a Blood Drive on December 12th from 1:30-6:00 in the Fellowship Hall. Please sign up online or call Belinda to schedule an appointment.

The Church Office will be closed December 25th- January 1st for the Christmas Holidays. The office will reopen at 9:00am on Tuesday, January 2nd. Merry Christmas!

The food pantry and Shepherd's table will be closed December 25th and January 1st. The food pantry will be open on Wednesday, December 27th.

There will not be Bible Study on Thursday mornings the month of December.

50 bags of beef jerky and chap stick are needed for the Haywood Pathways Christmas project. We are doing a goody bag for 50 men and women. Donations have been given to cover the other stuff for the bags. If you can donate, please bring the items to the church. Thank you for your help with this ministry.

Pastor Mike and Sue will begin the 8-week 3rd series of "The Chosen" beginning Wednesday, December 6th at 6pm in the music room. Everyone is invited to at

General Prayers:

Lucia Amerelli, Donna Brailsford, The Family of Cindy Fogle, Grace Heger, Bob Humphrey, Cheryl Little, Destiny Little, The Family of Jason Moody, Wanda Ann Kinnamon's Mother, Jim Neely, Carole Norquay, Georgia Painter, Janice Rogers, Michael Sams, Frank Santore, Bill & Mary Ann Vignola

Those in hospital and/or surgeries:

Mike Simon (Ohio)

Homebound/Nursing Home:

Becky Bender, Lady Hughes, Edna Palmer, Paul White- Maggie Valley Nursing & Rehab, Gail Pace- Silver Bluff, Phyllis Jackson, Polly Solley- Smoky Mtn Nursing Home, Clarissa Fisher-Florida
Kathryn Brannen, Willard Dockery, Joe & Helen Duke, Brenda Griswold, Zelda Hanson, Jeanette Miller, Dave Pickens, Leon Roach, Ron Sellers, David Wagner



THANK YOU'S...

Dear Church Family,

A special thank you to everyone who made the baby shower possible. We had a wonderful time and received so much love. We are so glad Christian will get to grow up in this church too.

Destiny Little and Ryan Bolden



December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Grace Bible Study (9:30)- Fellowship Hall Set up for Boutique	2 Holiday Boutique (9am-2pm)
3 Connections Sunday School Class (9am) Worship (10:30am)	4 Food Pantry (10-12) Shepherd's Table	5 One Board (6pm)- Fellowship Hall	6 Food Pantry (10-12) Bible Study (6pm)- Music Room	7 UMW(2pm)- Fellowship Hall	8 Grace Bible Study (9:30)- Fellowship Hall	9
10 Connections Sunday School Class (9am) Worship (10:30am)	11 Food Pantry (10-12) Shepherd's Table	12 Grief Share (1- 3pm)-Grace Classroom Blood Drive (1- 6pm)-Fellowship Hall One Board (6pm)- Grace Classroom	13 Food Pantry (10-12) Bible Study (6pm)- Music Room	14 Men's Group 5:30pm-Grace Classroom	15 Grace Bible Study (9:30)- Fellowship Hall	16 Men's Breakfast- (8am)-Fellowship Hall Wrapping Day (10am)-Fellowship Hall
17 Connections Sunday School Class (9am) Worship (10:30am)	18 Food Pantry (10-12) Shepherd's Table	19	20 Food Pantry (10-12) Bible Study (6pm)- Music Room	21 Blue Christmas (5:30pm)-Sanctuary	22 Grace Bible Study (9:30)- Fellowship Hall	23
24 Sunday School Class (9am) Worship (10:30am) Candlelight Service (5pm)	25 Merry Christmas! OFFICE, FOOD PANTRY, and SHEPHERD'S TABLE CLOSED	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 Food Pantry (10-12) Bible Study (6pm)- Music Room OFFICE CLOSED	28 OFFICE CLOSED	29 Grace Bible Study (9:30)- Fellowship Hall	30
31 Connections Sunday School Class (9am) Worship (10:30am)						

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES...

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

2	Natalie Roth	21	Christopher Nelson
5	Seth Rogers	21	Charles Rabjohns
5	Ben Yocom	22	Bob Wendel
8	Carol Schneider	25	Ann Best
9	Diana Duclos	26	Kayla Campbell
12	Sandy Giles	26	Ann Watts
12	Steve Dickinson	27	Beverly Ketner
13	Penny Clouse	30	Pam Cherry
13	Herman Oellerich	31	William Messer
16	Beverly Truesdale	31	Jeff Williamson
19	Carolyn Strickland		
20	Bea Hawkins		

HAPPY DECEMBER ANNIVERSARY!

12	Sharon & Darryl Ross
13	Stacey & Richard Boris (1980)
16	Joy & Don Bennett (1993)
19	Betty & Charles Rabjohns (2015)
21	Beverly & Mitch Truesdale (1974)
28	Janette & Ron Miller (1968)
28	Della & David Reeves



Minutes of Virtual Annual Conference Special Called Session November 4, 2023

The Virtual Special Session was called in response to churches wishing to disaffiliate from the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Per Rev. Kim Ingram, Conference Secretary:

1. The voting bar are the Clergy and Lay members of the Annual Conference as identified in the 2016 Book of Discipline, present and voting virtually.
2. The agenda is to vote on the Western North Carolina Conference Board of Trustees recommendations for churches choosing to disaffiliate from the UMC through the authorized process outlined in Paragraph 2553.

John Crane, WNC Conference Lay Leader, noted that we come here today to act upon the requests of churches who, having gone through a period of discernment and having followed the steps prescribed by our Book of Discipline and our Conference, are seeking to disaffiliate. He noted that there is no denying that this season of disaffiliation has been difficult with a sense of loss and disappointment. Yet, there is an unwavering trust in God and excitement for the future. Crane said that he is grateful for the contributions that these churches seeking to depart have made to further the kingdom of God in their communities and in and through our conference. He said, "I pray that God will guide their clergy, their laity and their ministries as they discern their path forward." As he reflected as to where the United Methodist Church is now, he's excited to see the powerful way that God is moving in, among and through our United Methodist Churches. An undeniable, fresh breath of God's Holy Spirit is all around us. There is a focus on what it means to be the church and not just what it means to be going to a church. He noted that it's a new season filled with possibility and purpose. He shared a prayer of blessing by Dr. Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie from their book, *The Lives We Actually Have*: "Blessed are we, turning our eyes ahead toward a new path not yet mapped. God, give us courage to take this next step, and enough for the one after that too. Remind us that you have gone before and behind, and around, and are with us now. In our leaving and our arriving, in our changes, expected and shocking, surprise us with whom we might become."

Per Bishop Ken Carter, 113 churches have initiated a process to depart from the connection of the cross and the flame. Bishop Carter shared the following thoughts: Tomorrow is All Saint's Sunday, and we will remember those who have passed into the church triumphant. When we share Holy Communion on this Sunday, it's an acknowledgement that the church is visible and invisible - past, present, and future. The gospel read for this Sunday will be Matthew 5:1-12 - The Beatitudes. He said that in preparation for this day, he had read the Beatitudes again, prayed them, gone back to commentaries, and even read his old sermons. Three of the Beatitudes resonated with him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He said, "We are all beginners in the Christian life. Even the saints know that they are beginners. We might find ourselves learning the same basic lessons, over and over again."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." He said, "If you have not been in mourning around the purpose for which we have gathered, you have not been paying attention." Bishop Carter shared that he was traveling back from a recent youth gathering and as he drove away, he passed a small church. He recognized that it was one of ours, but that the sign

had obviously been changed to remove any reference to a church name; only the time of worship remained. And he mourned. He observed that "We have not sufficiently mourned all who are a part of this occasion; we have not mourned those who have been harmed by the language in our Book of Discipline (members of the LGBTQ community, their families and friends); we have not mourned those who no longer feel at home in the church to which they've devoted their lives; and we have not mourned those who have departed from us. This is part of today's purpose. To mourn is to be honest; it is to express a loss."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." This can connote justice, holiness, or justification. This is a promise from Jesus for those who hunger and thirst for it. The pivot is directional — we are not who we have been, and we are not yet who we will be. We say goodbye to 113 departing churches. Of these churches, 25% support a full-time pastor which means 75% of these churches are small fellowships. We mourn their loss and what they have contributed to us. He also acknowledged that 20% of these churches have over the last 7 years contributed little in the way of apportioned giving or no funds at all. We mourn the loss of these churches as well.

After today's voting, Bishop Carter noted it is likely that we will be an annual conference of:

- 644 churches, which will make us one of the largest conferences in the UMC connections.
- 17 Emerging Communities
- 190 Fresh Expressions of Church
- 8 Campus Ministries • 5 Colleges/Universities
- 4 Camps
- 3 Retirement Communities
- Within our boundaries we have the extraordinary Lake Junaluska Retreat Center
- The equally extraordinary Hinton Rural Life Center
- Blessed with 671 Active Clergy

Bishop Carter said, "The landscape has changed, but the calling remains to righteousness and holiness. The calling to be welcoming and loving of the people who live in our communities. We are permitted and encouraged, along the way, to mourn and we do all of this with a poverty of spirit." In a complicated season, we are here to keep each other from stumbling. We are called to walk hand in hand. He directed his closing words to the two listening audiences. He said, "To those departing lay and clergy members attending your last United Methodist annual conference, we wish you blessing, peace and protection. We ask that God will bless your lives and ministries in the Gospel. That because of your life and witness, people will come to know faith in Jesus Christ, and we will always, always share this purpose in common. We ask for God's peace in your life. A part of this means, laity and clergy, you are not to recruit members from United Methodist churches, you are not to recruit clergy from the Western North Carolina Conference, you are not even to comment on who we are as a church. A church from which you are departing. None of these behaviors will contribute to your peace. To do so will not be easy but is essential. The ritual we are engaged in today marks the beginning of this new relationship. We pledge to you to do the same. Lastly, we wish you God's protection. May your next ministry or season in your Christian life provide for all your needs in body, mind, and spirit. And while we will not have a connectional responsibility or relationship with each other, we trust that God will provide all that you need. To those remaining, and this is the great majority of you, we call you again to the promises you made in your profession of faith, in your membership, vows and in your ordinations. We are called to

mourn losses in ways that are healthy and not to let any anger about this day consume us. We are called to maintain a poverty of spirit, a convicted humility and we are called to hunger and thirst for a just church, a loving church, a holy church, a faithful church, a welcoming church, an evangelical church, an inclusive church, a missional church." Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

The meeting then moved to the recitation of the 113 churches seeking disaffiliation. Of the eight districts in the Western North Carolina Conference, our district, Smoky Mountain, has 5 churches requesting disaffiliation: Iotla UMC In Franklin, Long's Chapel UMC in Lake Junaluska, Piney Grove UMC in Waynesville, Bethel UMC in Waynesville, and Louisa Chapel in Franklin. The Appalachian district has 10 churches, the Blue Ridge district has 13 churches, the Catawba Valley district has 16 churches, the Metro District has 16 churches, the Northern Piedmont district has 23 churches, the Uwharrie district has 18 churches, and the Yadkin Valley district has 12 churches. Voting members were then instructed to cast their ballots.

NOTE: Voting results were posted on November 8, 2023. All 113 churches that were voted on for disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church have passed and will continue the process of disaffiliation. In supplemental materials, it was noted that about 80% of the churches in the WNC Conference have chosen to remain United Methodist.

You can view the special session on wnccumc.org.

Submitted by Barbara Planchock Lay Member of Annual Conference



Maggie Valley UMC Worship Services – 10:30 am

4192 Soco Road

Maggie Valley, NC 28751

Office Phone (828) 926-8036

Fax (828) 926-3932

belinda@maggieumc.org

Rev. Cole Altizer, Pastor Cell (828) 577-9906

Rev. Mike Shirley, Associate Pastor Cell (804) 714-6319

Pavel Wlosok, Pianist & Choir Director

Janice Rogers, Organist

Belinda Marr, Administrative Assistant/Treasurer

"Knowing Christ, Growing Faith, Serving Others"

Maggie Valley United Methodist Church

"LOVE IN ACTION" Newsletter

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On the web at www.maggieumc.org

