

# The Lantern

DECEMBER 2014

MOUNT LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WILMINGTON, DEL. | EST<sup>d</sup> 1812



## A Word of Encouragement

I've heard a lot of concern expressed for our congregation these last several months and given the many dear souls who have departed this congregation through death or by choice over the last year, the level of concern is understandable. Anxiety seems to be on the rise. Many are being hit by serious health and family challenges and unable to attend worship or events like they used to. Folks are wondering whether our little church can survive all these losses.

Let me reassure you that God remains present and active among us in powerful ways. The Sunday school team met recently and discovered a renewed spirit and dedication to their ministry. The United Methodist Men's Sunday raised over \$600 to donate to the Sunday Breakfast Mission in thanksgiving for their ministry and the gift of the Men's Choir singing in worship. Over \$2,500 was raised for the church by the Silent Auction and over \$700 raised for the United Methodist Women by the Pasta Dinner. Three persons, Kay Shoemaker, Maxcy Hanby and Harry West have accepted the invitation to serve as our Lay Leaders in the new year and will provide a wonderful combination of personalities and presence in our church's leadership. A new worship team led by Maxcy Hanby and Iva Boardman has been formed and will soon begin meeting to navigate the critical worship needs of our congregation. And all of this in just the last month!

Friends, our congregation is in a time of significant transition, much of it beyond our control. I have a clear word of assurance from God that we are being tested and pruned at this time for purposes which we simply cannot yet see or understand. So our task in these days is to remain faithful. Our focus must be on loving God, loving our neighbor and loving one another with our very best efforts. Our hearts must expand. Our energies must be continually renewed by that great and limitless source of Holy Spirit power.

Let me encourage each of you with the words from Psalm 46:10-11: "Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

— *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## Important Dates

See more information throughout this issue.

- Dec. 3 — Candlelight & Communion
- Dec. 7 — Christmas Caroling
- Dec. 10 — Candlelight & Communion
- Dec. 12 — Food Closet
- Dec. 13 — Church Workday
- Dec. 17 — Candlelight & Communion
- Dec. 19 — Food Closet
- Dec. 20 — Angel Tree Celebration Party
- Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve Service

## Advent Wednesdays Worship Candlelight & Communion 6:30pm

All are invited to make time to breathe in God's Holy Spirit throughout this Advent season at a weekly worship service in the sanctuary. The evening will be filled with quiet reflection, silent prayer, songs of comfort and meditations on John 1:1-14 "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Communion will be celebrated each week. Invite your friends and neighbors for a special time-out during the hustle and bustle of these overly commercialized days.

— *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## Thank You

A big "thank you" to everyone who helped with, donated items, and bought items at the Silent Auction

in November. Over \$2,500 was raised for the Church! \$250 will go to food ministries and the remainder will help fund the general needs of the Church. It is a much needed "bump" in church revenues as we get towards the end of the year.

PRAISE GOD! — *Becky Byrd*



## Giving Statements

Wondering how you're doing with your pledge this year? Considering donating some additional dollars before the end of the year for tax purposes? If you'd like a statement of your year-to-date giving please email or call Becky Byrd (rebecca.byrd@gmail.com or 302-690-4992). To make sure that you get your statement by the end of the year, please try to request the information by 12/15/14. Please note, this is not your year-end tax statement; those will be sent out as usual after the first of year. Thank you again for all your donations made throughout the year, and we appreciate you making the effort to fulfill your 2014 pledge. — *Becky Byrd*

## Christmas at the Food Closet

Our joint ministry with Brandywine Community UMC is now feeding some 75-100 folks per week with our bi-weekly food distribution. The need is great and God's grace continues to provide. This year, we invite all our members and friends to remember those in need and donate gently used clothing, coats, children's toys and/or purchase modest items to donate that can be used as gifts: Christmas candy, women's makeup, bath and hygiene products for all ages and genders, hats, mittens, warm socks, long underwear. We want to try to provide a gift for each and every family member who comes through the Food Closet doors this December. Financial donations will also be put to good use as we try to purchase a large meat item for each family. Volunteers will be needed to help sort and distribute – Fridays, Dec. 12 and 19 from 9am-12:30pm. Thank you for your generous giving! — *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## SAVE THE DATE: 2015 Lay Academy

If you've ever been interested in learning how to put together a message or testimony, how to lead worship or lead public prayer, then this year's Lay Academy is for you! Every year, the Wilmington District Laity Board sponsors a variety of 5-week classes covering a number of different topics. This year, classes will be held Tuesday nights at Aldersgate UMC beginning April 14 from 7-9pm. Further details, registration info and a comprehensive class listing will be available soon at [www.wilmingtondistrict.org](http://www.wilmingtondistrict.org). Financial assistance to attend the class is always available, please see Pastor Jennifer.

— *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## Altar Flower Fund Reminder

In order to keep our record up-to-date, please contact Phoebe in the church office if you are not sure your payment has been made. The cost for altar flowers is \$25. — *Phoebe Chan*

## Wedding Custodian Needed

A wedding custodian is needed for Sat, Jan. 17, 2015 from 11:30am-5:30pm to open up, assist and clean up after a wedding scheduled at the church. This is a paid opportunity. Please see Pastor Jennifer if interested and available.

— *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## Angels Have Arrived

We are blessed to have received the names and gift wishes for twenty children who have been nominated by a parent who is incarcerated. The sign-up sheet will be posted in fellowship hall beginning November 30. We are asked to provide a piece of clothing and a toy for each of the children. You are invited to sign up for a single or multiple gifts as you are able.

The gifts will be given at our December 20 Christmas celebration party when Angel Tree and Mt. Lebanon families come together to sing, make Christmas cards, decorate cookies and enjoy lunch together. The party starts at 10am and goes until 12:30pm. All are invited to come because we are all young at heart. — *Iva Boardman*

## Special Offerings Collection

The Missions Team is so very grateful to report that \$2,700 has been received for the one time offering for the six annual offerings of the United Methodist Church. This generous amount will be divided evenly among the following: Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, Native American Ministries, Peace with Justice, World Communion Sunday and United Methodist Student Day. — *Iva Boardman*

## Poinsettias & Alternative Gifts

Once again this year you are invited to remember and/or honor special people and ministries with the purchase of Christmas poinsettias to help our church close its operating expense deficit. The cost is \$11 for each poinsettia ordered. Poinsettias will be available to pick up after the Christmas Eve service. Alternative gifts are also welcomed and appreciated. Please place your order by Monday, Dec. 15. Phoebe is also available to take any order over the phone at 652-8411. — *Phoebe Chan*

## Hot off the Press!

Rev. Dr. Marlene Louise Walter's latest book "Through Stained Glass" is now available at \$25/copy. The book "attempts to offer positive guidance to those who've survived losses and need a hopeful outlook through their life changes." Call Rev. Walters to request an autographed copy at 321-242-9949 or 321-243-0263. — *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

## Gratitude

T'was the night before Christmas, he lived all alone, in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone. I had come down the chimney with presents to give, and to see just who in this home did live. I looked all about, a strange sight I did see, no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No stocking by mantel, just boots filled with sand, and on the wall pictures of far distant lands. With medals and badges, awards of all kinds, a sobering thought came to my mind. For this house was different, so dark and so dreary, the home of a soldier, now I could see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone, curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home. The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder, not how I pictured a United States soldier. Was this the hero of whom I'd just read? Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?

I realized the families that I saw this night, owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight. Soon round the world, the children would play, and grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day. They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year, because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone, on a cold Christmas eve in a land far from home. The very thought brought a tear to my eye, I dropped to my knees and started to cry. The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice, "Santa don't cry, this life is my choice;

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more, my life is my God, my country, my corps." The soldier rolled over and soon drifted to sleep, I couldn't control it, I continued to weep. I kept watch for hours, so silent and still, and we both shivered from the cold evening's chill.

I didn't want to leave on that cold, dark, night, this guardian of honor so willing to fight. Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure, whispered, "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas day, all is secure." One look at my watch, and I knew he was right. "Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night."

— *Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

If you would like to contribute an article (or if you have a question or comment), please contact our editor: Christopher Portante, [cportante@gmail.com](mailto:cportante@gmail.com) or (302) 750-8353

## News from United Methodist Women

The UMW (United Methodist Women's Group) had a meeting on the November 17, at which our main discussion was how the silent auction dinner went and to thank everyone for their help in its success. We want to reach out to the entire congregation and thank each and every one who was nice enough to come out and help us, whether it be waiting tables, serving desserts or washing up a few dishes. Thank you one and all from our entire group.

We don't have a complete total until our December meeting but do know it will be over \$700. All proceeds will go to missions work. We then had our regular meeting discussing such things as future fundraisers and special speakers we would like to invite to upcoming meetings. Until our December meeting. Thank you again one and all!

— *Kay Frick, UMW Pres.*

## Fellowship Helpers: We need you!

If you are interested in helping, a signup sheet is available in Fellowship Hall.

## Join Us For Caroling and a Bonfire!

On Sunday, December 7 at 4:30, we will be lighting the bonfire and singing Christmas carols. There will be hot chocolate, marshmallow roasting, s'mores, etc.! We will be meeting on the field behind the church parking lot where Outdoor Worship services were previously held. Everyone is invited! Bring a friend or three!



# WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

## Sunday, December 7

*Second Sunday of Advent — Faith*

*Holy Communion*

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

## Sunday, December 14

*Third Sunday of Advent — Joy*

Isaiah 61:1-11; Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:1-14

## Sunday, December 21

*Fourth Sunday of Advent — Peace*

*Musical Celebration of Christmas*

2 Samuel 7:1-22; Luke 1:47-55

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

## Christmas Eve, December 24

6:30 p.m.

*Service of Candlelight & Communion*

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

## Sunday, December 28

*First Sunday of Christmastide*

*Hymn Sing*

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:22-40

*Special Missions Ministry Guest:*

*Carol Miller, Deaf Ministries*

## Reader:

Dec. 7 Harry West

Dec. 14 TBD

Dec. 21 TBD

Dec. 24 TBD

Dec. 28 TBD

## Fellowship Hour:

Dec. 7 TBD

Dec. 14 Karen Yasik, Maxcy Hanby

Dec. 21 Amy Furman/Iva Boardman

Dec. 24 TBD

Dec. 28 TBD

## Ushers:

Dec. 7 Chris Portante, Becky Byrd

Dec. 14 Chris Portante, Becky Byrd

Dec. 21 Barbara Ewing, Kathy Neilson

Dec. 24 —

Dec. 28 Barbara Ewing, Kathy Neilson



# Reflections...

**A Black and Blue Christmas** — While red and green are the “official” colors of Christmas, it strikes me that the colors “black and blue” might be more appropriate especially for the many of us who are grieving the loss of loved ones this holiday season. Not only are we already feeling “blue” with our sorrows, but we can easily feel “beat up” and made “black and blue” by well intentioned friends and society overall when we don’t join whole-heartedly into the joy of the season. But how can we do anything whole-heartedly when our hearts have been broken and are missing large chunks of their former selves?

It’s times like these when I am so very grateful for our Christian faith; for while Christmas is a time of rejoicing in the gift of Christ’s birth and life on earth, it’s also a time of remembering the suffering of an entire world that waits for the fulfillment of God’s promise of healing and salvation. We each of us may carry our own personal suffering but we are also painfully aware of those who are separated from family members and loved ones by military service, imprisonment or illness; those who are lost and wandering from mental illness or addictions or poverty that has laid them low. The prophet Isaiah put it this way, “Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her tem, that her penalty is paid...Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

If the hills and valleys of your life are seeming too high to get over or too deep to get out from, if the uneven ground is rockier than you know how to manage and the rough places are bruising you black and blue along the way, remember that God is still at work in this world and that God’s glory is still waiting to be revealed in all its fullness. And until that time comes, we hold together in faith the memory of that shining day when God’s very self was shared with the world through Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. We serve in the power of the Holy Spirit as Christ’s hands and feet for the world and we lean into God’s promise for life abundant and life eternal through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Take time to rest in Jesus through this season of joy and sorrow as you watch how God is carrying us through.

*Pastor Jennifer Kerby*

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## **MOUNT LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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Worship Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School at 9 a.m.