

SHARING

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HOHENWALD



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2015 NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

On the way to Christmas one year, I ran into an old friend while shopping. We talked a while and then he said, "This is such a strange season. Sometimes I find myself caught between the feeling of relief that I'm going to get it all done after all and that feeling of panic that there is no way I'll get it all done by Christmas Day." I know that feeling – don't you? It's hard to sit back and say, "Now I'm prepared – there's nothing more to do!" We never seem to reach that point.

But what keeps us going is the knowledge that, sooner or later, whatever we do or don't do, Christmas is going to come.

Somewhere this week, in between those feelings of relief (on one hand) and panic (on the other), it occurred to me that regardless of how **much** or how **little** we prepare, Christmas always comes as a gift. And as important as it might be, it's not **our** preparation that makes Christmas come. God's Christmas does not come as the end result of all our striving. It always comes undeserved and unexpected – as a gift – or not at all.

Sometimes it comes **through** and sometimes it comes **in spite of** the preparations we make, but it always comes as a gift. And that being so, I have given up

on a few items on my "get it all done in time for Christmas" list this year. Christmas will come whether they are done or not. And if I worry too much about them, they may keep me from knowing Christmas when it does arrive. And from knowing now how ready for Christmas I really am, whether I think I'm ready or not. Because, though my shopping isn't completed, and my cards are not all written, and I haven't visited everyone I need to visit – I have to admit I find myself desperately in need of Christmas.

And so the thought for today is this (and maybe it will help you survive these last few days): Christians aren't necessarily those who get it all done. Christians are not necessarily those who have it all worked out. Christians are simply those who know how desperate they are for God to come and be with them, how desperately they need the miracle of love, how dependent they are for God to come and be with them, how desperately they need the miracle of love, how dependent they are on God's birth in their midst. We don't have to be ready for Christmas so much as we have to be in need. That is the secret of Advent. Whether we are ready or not, God has responded to our need. Ready or not, God is on his way into the world.

-- Drew



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The United Methodist Women are making final preparations for our annual bazaar. Please reserve **Saturday, November 14** for a day of fine food and homemade goods. Our bazaar features beautiful handcrafted quilts as well as other quilted, embroidered, knitted, and stitched wares. We will have white elephant sales and the yummiest baked goods in Lewis County. Our lunch features homemade sandwiches and our ever-popular cheese/broccoli soup and chili, along with the most decadent desserts on Earth.

If you have donations for our white elephant sale, please drop them off at the church the week of the 14th during church office hours.

- UMW President Debby Campbell

COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

As the holiday season approaches, the Committee on Christian Outreach is suggesting several different ways that our congregation might participate in community Christmas ministries:

- (1) During the Sundays of Advent, you are encouraged to bring to church non-perishable goods and household supplies for the Lewis County Food and Clothing Bank. Wrap your gifts in white tissue paper place them under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary each Sunday. We will deliver all these "White Christmas" gifts to the LCFB after Christmas Day.
- (2) Instead of "adopting" families this year to supply food, toys and gifts, we have chosen to support the **Little Swan Creek Hunting Club's "Children's Christmas."** Mark Warrington will serve as our representative in this effort. (Please see following article for details). Make your checks out to HUMC and designate them "Little Swan HC Children's Christmas."

- (3) We are also encouraging those who might be willing to support the Lewis County Senior Citizen's Center in their effort to provide food and gifts to needy seniors throughout Lewis County. Make your checks out to HUMC and designate them "Lewis Co. Senior Center."

Thank you and God bless you for helping to support these important community ministries.

LITTLE SWAN CREEK HUNTING CLUB "CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS"



The Little Swan Hunting Club works throughout the year to assist underprivileged families here in Lewis County. We provide assistance to the elderly on fixed incomes who need help with their utility bills during the cold months, help people who experience catastrophic events like illness or house fires, provide food baskets to the elderly at Christmas time, and support a Children's Christmas program.

At the Children's Christmas program, the club provides a meal for the families who attend, and through donations like yours, we provide the children with clothes and gifts to ensure they will have a Merry Christmas. In each of the last several years, we have supported over 100 children.

We are asking that you donate some amount to help us in our works, particularly for the Children's Christmas program. It is only with the help of individuals and businesses in the county that we are able to provide help to these children and others in need.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your help in these works.

- Mark Warrington

YOUTH NEWS

The youth have been learning quite a bit from our study on John Wesley's "Three Simple Rules" by Rueben Job. We will be finishing up our study right before the Christmas break. We also love spending time in fellowship and enjoy a good game of basketball when time allows. We also took part in providing cookies for the Kairos prison ministry. We prayed over and baked 5 dozen cookies.



- Jennifer Bowen, Director of Youth Ministry

CHRISTMAS CANTATA SCHEDULE



The choir is working diligently on the cantata, "Come Messiah King." Due to the overwhelming response last year, we are scheduling two performances this year. They will be on **Saturday, Dec. 12 and Sunday, Dec. 13**, both beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary of the Church. They will be followed by receptions in the

Christian Life Center. We are being joined by several vocalists from other churches, which we appreciate so much. We will also have an instrumental ensemble composed of musicians from the Lewis County High School Band, along with Zach Newbold, violin; Judy Stilwell, viola; Nancy Sharpe, flute; Darin Cochran, euphonium; Lanette Durham, clarinet; Justin Bell, percussion, and our faithful pianist, Brenda Duncan, and organist Mac McLemore. Choir rehearsals are held on Mondays from 6:30 to 8 in order to accommodate our friends from the other churches. I am convinced that this Cantata has the potential of being the best yet. The talent that has been brought together, both vocal and instrumental, is truly outstanding.

Also, the choir will also be presenting special music on Sundays throughout the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, consisting of anthems and solos. We are fortunate to have several choir members who contribute so much to our worship services by the presentation of solos. In fact, I know of no other church of our size that is blessed with so much musical talent. We are fortunate indeed! God has truly blessed us!!

- Kenny Graves, Choir Director

FEATURED MEMBERS: TISH AND JUSTIN BELL

Many churches have bells, and they are quite proud of them. First United Methodist Church of Hohenwald has the Bells, and could not be more proud of them and how their love and talents are ringing out in our congregation and community.

Since Tish and Justin Bell became a part of our congregation, they have sought to serve. Both are full-time music educators in the Lewis County Schools as well as being parents to two handsome sons, one-year-

old Andrew and three-year-old Luke. Even with those responsibilities, they have made time to serve our church.

Justin, the new Director of Children's Ministry, works with the children of the church every Wednesday afternoon. Whether it is his background with the teaching of young people or an innate ability to connect with them, he seems to interact easily, patiently and effectively. Bringing with him a pumpkin to a recent October Wednesday activity session, he engaged the children in an activity of carving the pumpkin.



As he worked on the pumpkin, he sought their input and guided them in a lesson about how God is like a pumpkin-carver, taking out all the yucky insides and making us into something new and beautiful, illuminated from the inside by the light of His love. Each Wednesday activity session includes a lesson, a lot of interaction, opportunities for the children to ask questions, and a new challenge for the week ahead.

Following the Wednesday activities, Tish leads choir practice for the recently-formed Children's Choir. Children and youth are presently learning Christmas music and practicing for a play. The youngsters are learning harmonies and how to work together as a group. Eventually, the Bells want to incorporate musical instruments into the choir for those children who are learning to play instruments in school.

Tish and Justin met in high school, thanks to their high school band, in which both played. Married in 2008, they both earned master's degrees from Bethel with Justin receiving his degree in educational administration and Tish receiving hers in music education.

Tish, the daughter of a Methodist minister, used to accompany her father to the different churches he served as a travelling minister, and when she and Justin began dating, he joined in, helping her with music. Before being hired as Band Director for Lewis County High School and moving to Hohenwald, Justin was Children's Minister at Pleasant Valley Methodist Church. Since becoming the Band Director here, the band has quadrupled in size and is winning awards. Tish wears several hats with the school system – she is Band Director at the Middle School, Music Director at the Intermediate School and Assistant Band Director for the High School.

In addition to serving HUMC in the children's ministry and children's choir, they both sing in our choir, with Tish sometimes holding little Andrew in her lap. It's obvious the boys are raised in a happy, music-loving home. When they hear music, they often wave their little hands in the air, as if directing it themselves.

The Bells are music to our ears and hopefully will continue to be for many years to come.



IMPORTANT NOTES & NEWS



Drivers are still needed for the church van! We need volunteers who would be willing to transport children and adults on Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. You must be over 21 and under 70 years old, and hold a valid Tennessee Driver's License. If you think you might be able to help, please contact the church office.

The Administrative Board is pleased to announce the formation of a new "Children's Choir" direction of Justin and Tish Bell (see related story in this issue). It's for children from elementary – through middle school age and meets each Wednesday after Children's Fellowship. If you know children who might be interested, please see Justin or Tish. We have also started a Children's Choir Fund which will be used to underwrite expenses. If you would like to contribute, please write your check to HUMC, designating it for "Children's Choir Fund."

"Sharing" is the newsletter of First United Methodist Church of Hohenwald, TN, published six times a year as a service of the Christian Witness Committee. To submit news for "Sharing," please contact Deborah Baker at 931-285-0058; email her at deb.baker@wildblue.net, or leave your news or a note in the Newsletter mail slot in the hall outside the church office.