

The United Parish of Bowie



Special points of interest:

- Mission Study Team
- The Watoto Children's Choir
- Mission and Service
- Meet Our Nursery Attendant, Chantise Curry
- Census Time in Bethlehem

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JERI

Presence - Not Presents



21 I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

~Amos 5:21-24

As we embark upon the journey of preparing for Christmas 2012 and I reread *The Advent Conspiracy: Can Christmas Still Change the World?* by McKinley, Seay, & Holder; and *A Different Kind of Christmas* by Slaughter, it suggested that the above passage from Amos might today read something like this:

God says: I can't stand your hollow preparations for celebrating Christmas – you know the ones – the ones where you forget how I [God] came to earth in human form and died for your sins that you might have eternal life."

"I [God] am fed up with your planning for elaborate decorations and parties, your ruthless spending on stuff."

"I want nothing to do with your religious projects or your pretentious slogans and goals — How you say *Happy Holidays* or *Seasons Greetings* for fear of offending someone. I've had enough of your ego-music: *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*. When was the last time you sang to me [God]?"

"Do you know what I want?" asks God. "I want justice – oceans of it. I want fairness – rivers of it. That's what I want. That's all I want."

Now this is not to say Bah Humbug to Christmas, don't decorate, don't buy presents, don't celebrate and go to parties and have a good time. This is to say: assess what you are doing. Why do you celebrate the way you do? How are you responding to the celebration of the birth of Jesus as you await the Second coming, the return of Jesus? Where is the presence of God in Jesus Christ evidenced in your festivities? In your traditions of giving?

As you celebrate, what provisions are you making for those who are suffering and hurting, hungry and homeless? Remember Jesus' words: "What you do or do not do to the members of my family, you do to me." In this season of Advent (other times, as well) how are you/will you treat Jesus?

As you take time to reflect on how God perceives your traditions, your

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A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JERI, continued

pre-Christmas preparations, take time to reflect on your traditions. Why do you do what you do? During Advent, where do you experience God? Where is Jesus?" For example - Do you hang bright lights and think about how beautiful they are... or do you see how beautiful they are as you remember how the light of Christ shines through the darkness of a world that is chaotic and so full of pain? Sometimes all that is needed is to reframe what you are doing.

Do you set up the crèche, the nativity set, in the same place every year with little regard to the story and the characters? Or do you take the time to reflect on the experiences of Mary, Joseph, the angels, the shepherds, the wise men, and the Jesus lying in the manger? The child who reminds us - Emmanuel, God is with us; Jesus the Christ is born.

Do you look at the wreath and say, "WOW - look at the beautiful job I did!" or do you think about how the wreath is a circle, and represents God's steadfast, never ending love?

Do you have an Advent wreath at home? Do you light the candles and ritualistically say a quick prayer or do you take time for personal prayer and reflection, perhaps engage in a devotion? I love how some of my friends celebrate Advent. They intentionally eat their evening meal together. Before that meal they light the Advent candles and take turns reading a favorite scripture, talking about where they experienced the presence of God that day. They celebrate how Christ has come and will come again. Their conversations focus on hope, peace, love and joy. Even the youngest can contribute to the conversation.

Together these families are celebrating God's presence in their lives. Instead of focusing on how expensive gifts will be that they will give or receive and whether the gift is anything anyone really wants, they identify an injustice and then make a commitment to do something to help those who are in need, who are in pain or are suffering in anyway.

During Advent, we are called to prepare more than our houses and attend various functions. We are called to prepare our hearts and minds in order to make space for God's hope, peace, love, and joy - to make room for God's presence, to focus on Emmanuel - God is with us. We are called to look at the injustices of the world and to actively and intentionally do something to relieve the pain and suffering in this world.

Knowing this, how might you and your family begin to look at the preparation for Christmas in a new way? How might your activities focus on God's presence and not on society's way of presents?

This year Advent begins December 2. Come worship with anticipation as each week we light the Advent wreath in preparation for Christmas saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

Grace and peace and an abundance of blessings for the journey.

Pastor Jeri, Interim Minister

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And be sure to [Like us on Facebook](#)



A LOOK BACK AT FALL 2012

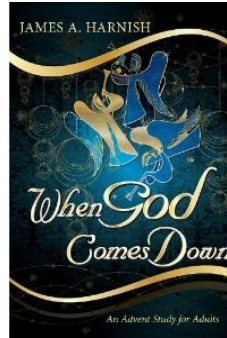


ADULT EDUCATION

Advent is here and we will explore When God Comes Down by James Harnish beginning December 2, 9, 16, and 23. Adult Ed begins at 9:30.

January 6 through February 10: We continue our lectionary study Feasting on the Word.

Our Lenten options are still being discussed so if you have an idea, please share it with someone on the committee.



BIBLE STUDY

We are interested in beginning another Bible Study. If you would like to be a part of this opportunity, please let Jeri, Diane or Shirley know.



MISSION STUDY TEAM

Exciting news! The Board has approved the following members to serve on the Mission Study Team:

Jan Barbato, Betsy Burian, Bill Collins, Sue Kennedy, Herb Sheppard

Upon completion of the study, a Pastor Nominating Committee will be elected. For now this committee is charged with the task of gathering data from various sources, including you; and developing a report that describes where you believe God is leading you as a congregation, who you are as a congregation, your hopes and dreams for the future of the church, and the skill set desired for your next installed pastor who will lead you into the next phase of your journey. Your input is important and valued. You will be hearing from this group in the upcoming weeks.



Tour to the Holy Lands

Have you ever wanted to visit the Holy Lands? Save January 2014 for this incredible tour. Dennis Dewey conducts a 10 day tour leaving New York. It includes 2 meals a day, hotel and side trips. It costs

\$3,000.00 per person. Jeri has taken this tour and highly recommends it. Ask Jeri for more details and contact information.



On December 16 at 6:00 p.m., we will welcome the Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda. They will tell their stories through music and dance. The Watoto Children's Choirs have toured Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Brazil and the UK. A freewill offering will be taken during their performance.

We have all the host families in place and are seeking donations to help supply two hotel rooms for the Choir Leaders and the bus driver.

This will be an excellent opportunity for you to share in a mission opportunity that our church is excited about. We wish to share this with the local community.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

It's already time for another newsletter and we just had yet another Storm of the Century. Say, you don't think there is any connection, do you? Nah, you're right, that's just crazy talk.

Hopefully, by now you and your family have had the opportunity to not only transition to the new study and worship times, but take full advantage of the expanded Christian Education offerings for every age group. With any change, there will be some unexpected glitches. Please don't keep them to yourself but freely share any concerns you have with the UPB leadership: Jeri and your UPB Board.

Once again there are a lot of great opportunities to get involved: Mission and Service, Spiritual Formation, Children Youth and Families, etc. For a church of this size, we take on an impressive amount of projects. Would you like to get involved, but don't think you can commit to a full year? Then the Teaming concept we have talked so much about may give you the opportunity to share your talents in a shorter timeframe. Committees are typically aligned functionally, where Teams are structured to support a specific event in time. Stay tuned for details about the decorating of the church for the season, where we will get people together to discuss what we have done traditionally, look at incorporating some new ideas and then get to it. A great time of fellowship and the old saying 'many hands make light work' is proved every year.

We will continue to do our best to keep the lines of communication open, not only for special events like Encountering Philippians and the upcoming Watoto Children's Choir, but for everything as it comes out: in Jeri's weekly message, in the beginning of the Worship Service during announcement time and in the bulletin. If you know of someone who is absent or doesn't get the news electronically, please grab an extra bulletin or print a copy of the weekly messages for them to help us communicate the good news! And if you have an upcoming event you want to be publicized, add a few lines about it to the UPB FaceBook page and for the bulletin a few weeks out. If you need help with this, please contact Robin.



THE BOARD CORNER

The Board has been working on several items. They include:

- * Committee Chairs (Ministry Team Leaders) - The Board has been inviting two Committee Chairs to monthly Board Meetings. The Board provides an open forum where Committee Chairs are asked to share insight, thoughts and experiences regarding the Committees they chair. The Board has been attempting to better support each Committee Chair as they tackle challenges associated with resources and time.
- * Policy Manual - The Board has been holding monthly planning meetings in order to develop a Policy Manual. Bear in mind, The United Parish of Bowie has never had a Policy Manual. It is our belief that the Policy Manual will be a work in progress for several months. Even though her term ends in Dec. 2012, Sue Kennedy has agreed to spearhead development of the Policy Manual. Stay tuned for updates in 2013!
- * Church By-laws - In 2013, the Board will be reviewing the Church By-laws. More information will be provided in the future.
- * Emergency Preparedness - Betsy Burian has been in communication with the City of Bowie to conduct an information meeting to the Board. The purpose of meeting would be to gauge whether the United Parish of Bowie would be interested and/or qualified to serve as an emergency shelter.

MISSION AND SERVICE



BOWIE'S CROP HUNGER WALK!

This year's Bowie CROP (Communities Respond to Overcome Poverty) walk raised over \$14,000 dollars; \$3,500 will stay in the Bowie community and \$10,500 will go to fight Global Hunger! Thanks to all who participated by walking, supporting or sponsoring a walker, or manning the water stations! Our local efforts made a huge difference. Thanks for being a part of it!



Shaw Ministry Thanksgiving Day Baskets

UPB supported Shaw Community Ministry (SCM) by purchasing nonperishable items to fill 10 Thanksgiving bags. Our support allows several families in the SCM community to prepare and serve their own Thanksgiving meals.

Central Union Mission-Operation Christmas Miracle aka "UPB Christmas Bag" Service Project!

UPB participated in Operation Christmas Child by purchasing gifts for 10 children this year for the 2012 Christmas gift distribution. Thank you for your support!

Upcoming Opportunities:

Living Waters for the World (LLW)

-During the 2012-2013 Sunday School year, the Christian Education classes have selected LLW as their service project. Our mission is to support the effort of LLW to bring clean drinking water to all God's Children in poor and developing countries all around the world. We invite you (the congregation) to join the children in this worthwhile endeavor. Please look for the large water bottle in the area outside the sanctuary and deposit whatever amount (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, or currency) you want to donate. website, <http://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org>.

Warm Nights

UPB participated in Warm Nights hosted by All Saints Lutheran Church on Friday, November 30. We provided the meal (chili, cornbread, salad, and dessert). We will also support Village Baptist Church when they host Warm Nights by providing the meal on Saturday, March 16.



Warm Nights, a faith-based organization run through Prince George's County Crisis Hypothermia Program, provides shelter and warm meals to homeless Prince Georgians during the winter.



Bowie Interfaith Pantry <http://www.bowiefoodpantry.org/>

The Pantry will be putting together dinner baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Donations of any of the following would be greatly appreciated:

Boxed instant mashed potatoes, stuffing, canned mushroom soup, French fried onion pieces, gravy, pumpkin pie mix (not pure pumpkin), fruit pie filling, boxed pie crust mix, hot chocolate, hot apple cider packets, marshmallows, pancake mix, syrup, snacks-salty or sweet, and holiday paper products.

SMILES ALL AROUND!



We would like to extend a big welcome to our new nursery attendant, Chantise Curry. Chantise graduated from Largo High School, lives in Laurel, and has a 20 month old son, Amari. While in high school, she was a scorekeeper

for the Regional Science Bowl and an assistant coordinator for the National Science Bowl. She has worked with both youth and young children as a teaching assistant and teacher. Currently she is a teacher at Wonders Child Care Center where she is responsible for children ages three to five. We are very blessed to have Chantise nurturing our nursery aged children and hope that everyone will take the opportunity to meet her over the next few months.

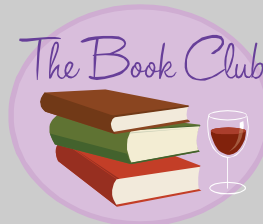
ENCOUNTERING PHILIPPIANS



Special thanks to Stephen Trafton for sharing his God-given talents with the United Parish. On September 29th, Stephen gave a dramatic portrayal of Paul's Letter to the Philippians. Stephen worshipped with us the following day and sang beautifully "Impossible Dream" from the musical "Man of La Mancha." Thank you Stephen for sharing the love of God!

Please help Stephen spread the love, by passing his name and email:

encounteringphilippians@gmail.com to other ministries.



The UPB Book Club meets at 7pm at the Barbato home. Please join the discussion and time of fellowship.

December 7	<i>The Timekeeper</i> , Mitch Albom
January 4	<i>Freeman</i> , Leonard Pitts
February 1	<i>Double Cross</i> , Ben McIntyre
March 1	<i>Bad Religion</i> , Ross Douthat
April 5	<i>The Art of Racing in the Rain</i> , Garth Stein
May 3	<i>Thunderstruck</i> , Erik Larson
June 7	<i>Love Anthony</i> , Lisa Genova

Possible Summer Reading: *Pillars of the Earth*, Ken Follett

WINTER SEEDS



SEEDS will resume on Wednesday, January 9, 2013 and will continue every Wednesday through

February 6. Dinner is at 6:00, followed by music, Bible stories, and games in the sanctuary.

During the fall we focused on the words pray, grace, and trust. We talked about forgiveness and what it means to be a Christian, the meaning of Communion, reviewed the Lord's Prayer, and learned several songs, including "Amazing Grace."

This is a great time for families to gather together for food, fun, and worship, so please plan to attend. And if you are able to help provide a meal, please speak to Pearl Donovan.

The United Parish of Bowie

United in Christ Our Mission: To Serve

BE SURE TO REMEMBER...



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Opt-Out: UPB's Use of Names and Images - While we never publish individual children's names without expressed parental consent, we do publish images of groups of children. In addition, at times we publish both names and images of individual adults, as well as groups. If you wish to not have any names or images for members of your family published, please contact Dina Bickel to opt-out of further publications.

December 15: Greening of the church
December 16: Christmas play at 10:45 am
Watoto Children's Choir at 6:00 pm
January 9, 2013: Winter SEEDS begins
March 16, 2013: Warm Nights Meal
June 23, 2013: Church in the Park



The Children and Youth present

Census Time in Bethlehem

Come and learn about the different names of Jesus as Bethany A. Countable talks to Mary and Joseph, trying to get an accurate "count" for the census.

There will also be shepherds and angels, and everyone will have the chance to sing "Away in a Manger" and "O Come all Ye Faithful." Mark your calendars now so you won't miss this special presentation!

December 16, 2012 at 10:45 am
The United Parish of Bowie

