



United Parish of Bowie

United in Christ – Our Mission: To Serve

A Message from Pastor Chris...

Thanksgiving has come and gone and that means it is the Christmas Season, right? Maybe on the secular calendar, when we start our Christmas shopping and preparing the day after Thanksgiving (if not earlier).

The church calendar tells a different story, though. The season of Christmas actually doesn't start until December 25th and it goes until Epiphany (the day the wise men came and saw the Christ child) on January 6th. The season of Christmas lasts for 12 days, hence the 12 days of Christmas.



The four weeks before Christmas are the season of Advent, a time of longing, expectation, and preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas, while at the same time anticipating and looking forward to the time when Christ will come again. Advent gives us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the birth of the Messiah, while still being alert for the time that He will come again.

I've known pastors that will not sing Christmas hymns until Christmas. I've also known pastors who will not light the Christmas (or Chrismon) tree until Christmas. They do this to draw a distinction between Christmas and Advent, and to heighten the anticipation for Christmas. It is difficult to draw the

distinction between the two when Christmas carols are being played everywhere you go, there are Christmas parties every weekend, Christmas specials or cheesy Christmas movies are seemingly on every night, and everybody is telling you to get into the holiday spirit!

Sometimes I think kids are the only ones who really get both Advent and Christmas. Yes, kids often think Christmas is just as much about Santa Claus as it is about Jesus, but kids really get it. Remember back when you were a child, the month of December seemed like the loooooongest month of the year. It seemed like Christmas would NEVER get here. Christmas Eve, itself, was at least three weeks long! Remember the excitement, the anticipation, the longing. *That* is what Advent is all about! As adults, sometimes I feel that we can't wait to just be done with Christmas. To have all the parties thrown or attended, all the gifts purchased and wrapped, the tree decorated, or all the meals prepared. We just want to be done with the business! Children, however, eagerly await that magical morning!

Kids also get Christmas. Christmas morning, children accept gifts with pure joy and thanksgiving (unless it is the dreaded box of socks and underwear). That is how we should accept the gift of Christ that we celebrate being given at Christmas. We celebrate the gift of Christ, because it is a gift freely given out of love.

This holiday season, try to become like a child again. Try to recapture the anticipation of Advent and the magic and joy of receiving on Christmas!

Matthew 18:3 "Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

In early November, the Communications Committee launched a redesigned church website www.unitedparishbowie.org. The new site builds on the high standard established long ago by Mike Mehl by offering refreshed content, simplified navigation, and an optimized layout for any computer or Internet-compatible phone. The new design provides easy accessibility for general information, FAQs, sermon audio files, newsletters, and the church calendar. Please encourage anyone interested in learning about our church to visit the UPB website.



Thank You!

Dear church family,

Thank you so much for the thoughtful gifts for Pastor's Appreciation month. It's hard to believe that it was just two years ago that Hannah, Heather, and I were packing up and moving here to make UPB our home. I look forward to seeing where God leads us in the future. Thank you again for the gifts and the sentiment that were carried with them.

*Faithfully,
Chris Deacon*

Mission and Service

"Macaroni Kid" is a program that publishes weekly newsletters featuring family-friendly community events. In October, UPB hosted one of their non-profit play days for children. Each family was asked to bring canned goods for the Bowie Food Pantry. Over 100 cans were collected.

In November, church members not only helped serve but also provided a "taco night" for over twenty-six individuals who are waiting for affordable housing. This is run through Prince George's County Crisis Hypothermia Program. They provide shelter and warm meals to many Prince George's residents during the winter months. All Saints Lutheran Church housed these wonderful folks and area churches provided food for the week.

The congregation continues to provide home-cooked meals on the 3rd Sunday of each month for the Family Crisis Center. This is a safe house for victims of abuse in Prince George's County.



We invite you and your family to our

Christmas Open House

Stop by anytime

Sunday, December 18th

3:00-6:00

12500 Rockledge Dr, Bowie, MD 20715

Come celebrate the season with good food and good friends!

~ Chris, Heather, and Hannah Deacon



Board Corner: Winter 2016-17

It is important to the Board that the congregation is kept informed on discussions that are taking place and decisions that are being made for the good of the United Parish. Minutes of Board meetings, agendas, monthly financial reports, and Pastor's reports are kept in a binder in the church library.



In the past few months the Board:

- Continued to work on the UPB Policy Manual. Policies that have recently been written or revised include: a Child Protection Policy, a Sexual Misconduct Policy, a Building Usage Policy, and a Financial Review Policy.
- Approved the purchase and installation of carpeting in the day care and nursery areas of the church.
- Approved a new format for Rally Day (Kickoff Sunday) which occurred on September 11, 2016.
- Encouraged the Nominating Committee to choose candidates for the next Board vacancies.
- Continued a four-month long discernment process. One recent topic was: "How are we responding to God's call?" The information from this process will be used in formulating a strategic plan for the church.
- Prepared for the upcoming pastor evaluation.
- Agreed to downsize the Board from nine members to seven members in 2017.
- Approved new plaques to be placed in the church's memorial garden.

The Board is meant to represent the membership of the United Parish. Please feel free to contact any Board member or Pastor Chris with your ideas, suggestions, and/or concerns. The current Board members are: Gene Barbato, Elsie Carroll, Sharon Doughty, Terry Drown, Roy Eades, Sue Kennedy, Julissa Orta, Nancy Snyder, and Walter Trafton.

SEEDS

Fall SEEDS was filled with lots of different activities as we used curriculum from the Narrative Lectionary to learn more about the Bible. Bible verses came from Genesis, Exodus, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. We learned about God's promise to Abram and that we are all part of one big family. We read the story of Joseph and talked about how we would have felt if we were Joseph, his brothers, and Jacob. We went on a freedom march to help us understand the Exodus story. We talked about how God will continue to love us and welcome us back, even when we forget to do what we are supposed to do. We read about Hannah and learned that God hears prayers and cares for everyone, even the forgotten ones and those some may think are worthless. We also used shoeboxes to build a temple!



Thanks to the following who helped provide food: Dina Bickel, Shirley Bickel, Mary Bird, Linda and Jeff Caler, Elsie Carroll, Joey and Terry Drown, Judy Farrell, Latoshia Hunt, Tanya Settles, Janice

Sheppard, Nancy Snyder, and the SEEDS Team.

Winter SEEDS begins on Wednesday, January 18 and will continue through February 22. We are always looking for new and exciting ways to help our children, youth, and families grow in their faith. If you have any ideas, or would like to be a part of the SEEDS ministry, please see Diane or Sue.

A Look Back at Fall 2016...





Practice has begun our Christmas play, “Felix (Felicity) Finds Christmas,” a story of God’s heart for adoption. If you want to know who Felicity is and why she is looking for Christmas, come to the play, which will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 18 at 10:00 a.m. You do not want to miss this special event!

Pastor Evaluation Input Due December 18

In December, the United Parish of Bowie Board will be conducting the annual pastor evaluation process. This year we will not be distributing a printed questionnaire. Instead, you can email your feedback to Gene Barbato at

genebarbato@comcast.net, or give it in writing to any Board member by December 18. Your prayerful consideration for being a part of this process is appreciated.





Invite your family, friends and neighbors to celebrate Christmas with our family!

Join us for a candlelight Christmas Eve Service on Saturday, December 24 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Narrative Lectionary Update

This past fall, we began the Narrative Lectionary. We started at the beginning with the creation story in Genesis. We followed the path of God's people who ended up enslaved in Egypt by telling the stories of Abram and Joseph. We saw the Israelites freed from captivity with the story of Moses and the Passover. Then, we moved to the early days of Israel as we heard the tales of the dedication of Samuel, of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and Jonah. We heard from the prophets; Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel before, during, and after the exile of Jerusalem by Babylon. During Advent, we wait and hope for the prophets for the coming Messiah.

On Christmas, with the birth of Christ, the Narrative Lectionary, and the narrative of scripture moves into the New Testament. There are four years in the Narrative Lectionary with each year focusing on each Gospel's telling of the life of Jesus from birth at Christmas to his resurrection at Easter. This year, we will be looking at the life and ministry of Christ through the lens of Luke's Gospel. We will then move into the life of the early Church in the books of Acts and Galatians.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

This year, children, youth, and adults have been using the Narrative Lectionary Curriculum, “Living the Truth.” The scripture passages and lessons correspond with Pastor Chris’ sermons. The themes for the fall were Promises Made, Promises Broken, and God Sightings. Scripture passage came from Genesis, Exodus, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Themes for the winter are The Hope of the Messiah and Revelation of the Son of Man with passages from Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, and Luke. If you have not had a chance to be a part of this exciting opportunity to learn about the Bible together, please plan on starting during Advent. Thanks to all who have helped lead these classes: Jan Barbato, Shirley Bickel, Sharon Doughty, Mike Mehl, and Pastor Chris.



The CYF is also very excited to announce that a Pre-K Sunday School class has begun!! Each class begins with hearing a story from the *Jesus Storybook Bible* followed by a related activity and snack. The children are also given something to take home to share with their parents. If you have a chance, check out the Creation story on a backboard in the Narthex.

Ongoing Ministries

Worship and Christian Education

Worship Service- Worship will be at 10:00 a.m. with nursery available
 + 1st Sunday Communion
 + 3rd Sunday (*usually*) Children's Sermon w/ Puppets;
 Time with Children all other Sundays
 Choir Wed. 7:30 p.m. and Sunday 9:30 a.m.
 Adult Education- Sundays 11:15 -12:00 p.m.
 Sunday School- Sundays 11:15- 12:00 p.m.
 Seeds of Worship Family mid-week ministry program at UPB.
 Wednesday 6:00—7:15 p.m.

Mission and Service

Crisis Center Meal UPB provides Family Crisis Center dinner. Sign up to bring a part of the meal 3rd Sunday bring your donation to UPB.
 Bowie Food Pantry Please bring your non-perishable food donation, paper goods, baby items (diapers/wipes), and toiletries to the basket in the Narthex. Thanks for your generous giving.

Fellowship

Chat & Chew Food and fellowship time: after worship. 2nd & 4th Sundays in the Narthex
 Men's Breakfast: 2nd and 4th Thursday 7:45 a.m. Nautilus Diner, Crofton
 Men's Night Out: 3rd Thursday 6:30 p.m. (Location TBA)
 Book Club: 1st Friday night of the month at the Barbato home
 Ladies Luncheon: 2nd Friday 11:30 a.m. Olive Garden
 Ladies Night Out: 4th Thursday 6:30 p.m. Old Bowie Town Grille

Upcoming Events and Services: Winter 2016 and Beyond...

December 18: Christmas Play, 10:00 a.m.
 December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7:00 p.m.
 December 25: Christmas Day Worship Service, 10:00 a.m.
 January 22, 2017: Annual Meeting
 June 18, 2017: Church in the Park
 July 9-15, 2017: Mars Hill Mission Trip
 July 24-28, 2017: Art & Music Camp



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2515 Mitchellville Road

Bowie, Maryland 20716

Visit us on the web at www.unitedparishbowie.org or on Facebook
or contact UPB at 301-249-6411 or ckdeacon@yahoo.com.