



JESUS

Light of the World

A Season of Wonder and Awe

It is easy to become cynical during the Christmas season amid the ever expanding advertising blitz of stuff that we must own or buy in order to have a Merry Christmas and please ourselves and our families. Should not celebrating Jesus' birthday be something more than capping off a successful retail sales year to bolster our economy? Besides no one really knows for sure when Jesus was born any way so why do we celebrate it on December 25th?

Originally the early Christian church chose that date to offset the pagan feast days centered around the winter solstice, and it turned out to be a stroke of genius in more ways than one. First, back then most believed that the winter solstice, the shortest and darkest day of the year was a period of "thin time" when the boundaries between the spiritual world and the material world became hazy and merged. What an opportune and magical time for the Divine to enter our time and space! Secondly, when we read about the ultimate impact of the Word made flesh in the Prologue to John, "In Him was life, and His Life was the light of men" (John 1:4), then what a perfect time for the Light of the World to make an entrance than on the darkest day of the year. Now I do not know much about astrophysics, but I have been told that the only constant in the universe is the speed of light, and all the experts agree that light is the most ubiquitous thing in the universe – it is everywhere. In fact, even black holes, the densest part of the universe, are now found to be composed of billions and billions of neutrinos of *light*. So there is no part of the universe free from light, and now I ponder new meaning into the verse, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it." It makes me think that maybe from the very beginning there was a Christ consciousness governing the universe itself and moving in the direction of the Incarnation.

For sure, all these musings help me to approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus with a profound sense of wonder and awe. Did not wonder and awe fill the lowly shepherds when they saw the blazing angel in the night sky of Christmas Eve? Were not the Magi spurred on by the same wonder and awe when they saw the Star of Bethlehem leading them on in that same night sky? But for me the wonder and awe that is ceaseless and mystifying is that God would risk human embodiment and human vulnerability to come into the world as a defenseless baby. God closed the gap to meet us where we are, and from then on it was good to be a human being. Christmas already accomplished what Easter revealed. And Christmas is not the time to worry about the "why's" and "how's" of this mystery; for no one falls in love with theological concepts. Now is the season to be enchanted like the shepherds and Magi and fall in love with the only thing we can fall in love with: another human being – the Baby Jesus! And just stand in the wonder and awe of that event!

And in that aura know that as agents of Christ, we, too, have the power to create on a smaller scale, wonder and awe in our own families and our own communities. Let us do something special this Christmas for the God who did something very special for us, and we will be blessed with an overpowering feeling of the wonder and awe of God's Love. Merry Christmas to you and all of your extended family from all of us at St. Paul United Methodist Church!

Dan Vanoli

Note: Some themes in this letter adapted from lectures by Richard Rohr

Did You Know...

- ◆ that the recent Sub Sale was very successful and netted nearly \$1100 for the Outreach Ministries?
- ◆ that the Young Peacemakers' Club Family Dinner was a great celebration with 125 YPC children, their families, Big Brothers & Big Sisters from U.D., the Occupational Therapist from Sinclair, St. Paul staff and other volunteers?
- ◆ that Christ UM Church just completed a "coat project" in which all the children in Young Peacemakers and several youth received beautiful new coats, hats & gloves?
- ◆ that the United Methodist Women of St. Paul UMC will host the United Methodist Women from Centerville UMC on Sunday, December 8th at 1pm? *Ann Griener, Conference Spiritual Growth Coordinator, will conduct the installation service for the officers of both units. The program will be "Poor, Young & Pregnant-Marys Advent."*
- ◆ that you are invited to **Limitless: Redefine Tomorrow** on December 28 at Christ UMC? *Limitless is a multigenerational event designed to engage & encourage women to grow spiritually, explore the mission work of the church, and take action where justice is needed in our communities. Join us! Let loose energy & creativity. Be part of the new and exciting time of change and development for the United Methodist Women. You do not have to be a member of the United Methodist Women to participate, so bring a friend! Call the church office for details and registration information.*

At a Glimpse...During October 2013, with your support, St. Paul...

- Served **1688** nutritious hot meals at **Tuesday lunch** and **Saturday breakfast**.
- Provided **groceries** to **1048** individuals for **15,720** meals through the **Emergency Food Pantry**.
- Put over **1300** pieces of good used clothing into the hands of many grateful people and made \$654.00 for the Outreach Ministry.

Celebrate! Bells Will Be Ringing! To kick-off your holiday season, come listen to the chiming of holiday bells as the Dayton Gay Men's Chorus teams up with the Sinclair Concert Handbell Chorus. They will perform yuletide favorites (and then some).

Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 6:00pm

Westminster Presbyterian, 125 North Wilkinson St.

Tickets \$15.00

Tickets for *Celebrate!*, the DGMC concert can be purchased via the website, www.daytongaymenschorus.org, or at the door.

Volunteer Spotlight

Every Tuesday at St. Paul, the St. Paul Community committee receives a delicious hot meal provided by one of 28 congregations from around the Miami Valley. What a special blessing for everyone involved!

Through a long tradition of providing this weekly meal, there is a small group of faithful in-house volunteers who do the support work for every meal. These loyal super volunteers are Emma Bey, Mary Deal & Donna Jones. Each week they cheerfully greet our guests, distribute plastic ware and serve hot & cold drinks. Emma, Mary and Donna-thank you for offering "Radical Hospitality" in the name of St. Paul!



Donna



Emma



Mary

CHURCH NEEDS LIST

Kleenex
Paper Towels

PANTRY NEEDS LIST

Canned Meat
Canned Soup
Cereal/Oatmeal
Cooking Oil
Drink Mixes
Dry Beans
Hot Chocolate Mix
Jam/Jelly
Kidney Beans
Pancake Mix/Syrup
Bar Soap
Diapers (size 2, 3, 4)
Kleenex
Laundry Soap
Shampoo
Toothpaste
Paper/Plastic Bags

If your church group or organization would like to participate in a meaningful mission experience, the following 2014 Tuesday Community Lunch dates are available:

January 14
December 2
December 9

Please call 937-252-4467 to reserve a date.

This is your opportunity to purchase delicious homemade "Buckeye Candy" from the United Methodist Women at St. Paul UMC. All orders & money are due by Sunday, December 8th. Your orders will be available for pick up on Sunday, December 15th.





Faith makes all things possible,
Hope makes all things work,
Love makes all things beautiful,
May you have all three
for this Christmas.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Rev. George Brewer
Tawnya Lambert
Chuck Shields
Rebekah Clapp
Wanda Fox

Joan Johnson
Robin Gann
Beth Wiley
Cora Crain

Opportunities for Christmas Sharing

- Provide **new gifts** for our Parents' Pride Shop and Children's Santa Shop. Gifts are needed for all members of the family and are needed by **December 6th**.
- Provide **gift cards**.
- Provide **cash donations** for utility bills and grocery gift cards. These gifts will be given to families instead of the Adopt-A-Family program that has taken place in past years.
- For more information, please contact Joan or Tawnya at 937-252-4467.

Come and join us on Saturday, December 21, 2013 at 5:30 pm as we celebrate the Mexican tradition of Las Posadas in Spanish. There will be a carry-in dinner to follow. Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share, if possible.

Todos están invitados el sábado, el 21 de diciembre de 2013 al 5:30pm para celebrar la tradición mexicana de Las Posadas. Tendremos una cena después del servicio y habrá comida, música y mucho más. Por favor de traer un platillo para compartir, si es posible.



Join us on Tuesday December 24th at 7:00 p.m. for our traditional Candlelight Service.
Nochebuena- Todos están invitados, martes el 24 de diciembre al 7:00pm.

