

First News

December 2020

First United Methodist
Church

Volume 20, Issue 12

A Note from Pastor Toni

Dear Friends,

As I write letters and sermons each week, as I engage in conversations, as I think and pray about life and the church, who we are and who we seek to be, it so often seems like Covid-19 gets main billing. The way we do life has changed,

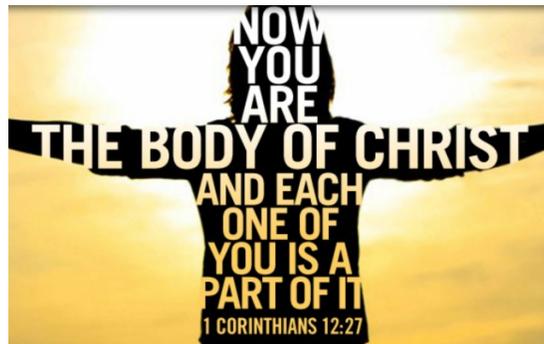
the way we interact with one another as a church and the way we interact together as a family—and in our families—is

all different, and we can legitimately blame that on Covid.

“Rona” our son Chris calls “her.” He and his family aren’t feeling well right now, and they’ve each “dodged the bullet” a couple of times in being exposed, quarantining, and not getting sick. But I’m not sure they’re so lucky this time. Rona has possibly moved into one of the Carmer households.

I’m really tired of Rona, and I

know you are, too. She has thrived in her role on center stage, and from what I understand, the next 8-12 weeks are critical for all of us. Rona has mutated a number of times, and she prolifically and easily infects whoever is standing close. Literally. But if we remain diligent, if



we follow the “3 W’s” (Wash your hands, Watch your distance, and Wear a mask), she’ll wear down and we’ll step into a new

normal. The vaccine will be a major weapon to add to our arsenal, but in the meantime, we aren’t powerless. Truly, the 3 W’s will make a difference.

One of the things we miss is the “embodied” Body of Christ. We miss shaking hands and hugging, seeing each other face-to-face, and being able to respond to

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A Note from Pastor Toni *continued*

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each other's smiles. We miss singing the hymns together. At one time, we lamented how we missed the pipe organ across the alley; now we just miss raising our voices together.

On All Saints Sunday, I so missed singing "For All the Saints" with you and the organ. It gets me every time. The phrase in verse 5, "... when hearts are brave again, and arms are strong," literally brings to mind loved ones whose loving hearts and strong arms have sheltered me: in glory I envision them again as strong and full and vibrant in the presence of Christ. There's something about singing that together. I know. I miss it, too. Knowing that we won't be able to sing the Advent hymns (sorry, I'm one of those who loves singing the minor keyed hymns) and Christmas carols together doesn't make me feel any better. I'm really tired of Rona and the problems she's causing us.

But here's the thing: we are no less the church now than we were 9 months ago. We are still Christ's Body, and the Holy Spirit is bigger and stronger than Rona can ever be. That doesn't mean we behave thoughtlessly or carelessly "putting the Lord to the test" as Jesus talked about when the devil tempted

him in the wilderness. It means that Rona is going to ride off into the sunset, while God will continue to ensure that just as the sun sets each night, so too, will it rise again in the morning.

Be patient, my friends. Continue to be the church. Connect to our worship services online (or if you can't do that, spend time with

the order of worship and sermon and think about what God might be saying to you through the scripture). Read your Bible. Find a devotional or Advent study that sounds interesting to you! (Do it alone or with others. I'm including the names of a few new studies in this newsletter that have come out this year for

your consideration.) When someone comes to mind who you miss, give them a phone call! Send notes and cards. Gather and perhaps deliver food (to the neighborhood center, food bank or to someone who may just be getting tired of their own cooking. You can let them know it's coming and leave it on the doorstep!). See if someone needs you to shop for them if you're going out anyway. Show your love—however you best do that! Be kind. Smile (you can see smiles behind those face masks!) Be generous in your giving—to the ministries of the church and the ministries we have committed to support in



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A Note from Pastor Toni *continued*

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this community and beyond.

Rona might prevent us from **going** to church, but she can't stop us from **being** the church. We're learning to worship and do ministry in a new way. Though we miss seeing each other—don't deny it—there are those of you who enjoy watching in your jammies in the comfort of your own living room. But

we're going to get through this. Sunday's coming, but we have to live through Friday, first.

God is with us, and we can do all this through God who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Because of this, I am confident in our future.

Be Encouraged,

Toni



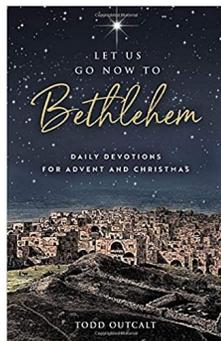
I Can Do
ALL THINGS
through
Christ
who
Strengthens Me
PHILIPPIANS 4:13



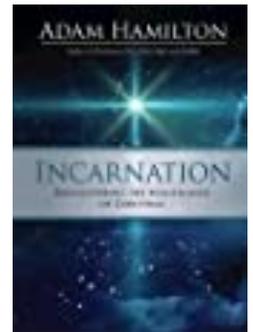
A.S.K. meetings (at 6 pm on Sundays) will be virtual until further notice and the last meeting of the year will be December 13th.

New Advent Studies You May Enjoy

Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem: Daily Devotions for Advent and Christmas, by Todd Outcalt. (Todd is a United Methodist pastor in our Indiana Conference.)



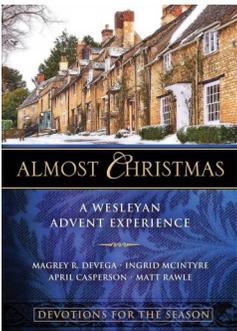
Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas, by Adam Hamilton



There are more, but these are three I've picked up and plan to spend time with in this season!

Toni

(These are available through Cokesbury, Amazon and other sources)



Almost Christmas: A Wesleyan Advent Experience, by De Vega, McIntyre, Casperson, Rawle

Preaching Plan for Advent and Christmas *continued*

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December 6, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

Series: I Believe Even When...

Texts: Isaiah 7:1-14; Matthew 1:18-25

Title: I Believe in Love

Theme: In both the Gospel of Matthew and Isaiah, a messenger appears as a sign from God, ushering in a new era. In each passage, the words “do not be afraid” appear...offering a clue that the messenger—whether prophet or angel—was talking about something that created fear in the listener. A new way of being, of relating and loving takes courage—turning away from the present order of things so that a new and better way can be born.



ADVENT

SERIES:

“I BELIEVE
EVEN WHEN...”



December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

Series: I Believe Even When...

Texts: Isaiah 57:14-19; Luke 1:1-4; 26-56

Title: I Believe in God: Ode to Joy

Theme: This week we turn to

Luke’s writing which is an account in two acts: the Gospel biography of Jesus and then the story of the early church—the “Jesus community.” Whether you were a Jew or Gentile in those days, deciding to become a part of this illegal early Christian movement could bring punishment for your allegiance. Surely, the message in both Luke and Isaiah that the downcast, lowly, and oppressed would rise up is a welcome and inspirational account. Like the Jewish exiled people of Isaiah’s time and the early Christians, we also sometimes wonder where God is in our suffering. We long to hear the promise that a reason for joyful praise is the good news on the way!

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Series: I Believe Even When...

Texts: Isaiah 9:2-7; John 1:1-5

Title: I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace

Theme: The “great light” prophesied by Isaiah in today’s text is echoed in the first

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Preaching Plan for Advent and Christmas *continued*

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strains of John's Gospel of good news: the light that brings peace—that saves the people from all that would extinguish it—has been there from the beginning. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us. The reign is now... will we believe it? Will we continue to put flesh on it, embodying the peace meant for all humanity?

December 24, 2020

Christmas Eve

Series: I Believe Even When...

Texts: Isaiah 52:7-10; Luke 2:1-20

Title: We Believe, Even Now

Theme: Luke's account is the narrative we return to again and again on this holy night, for this author gives us the most beloved detail. We long to see the scene play out, to hear the music of the angels, to feel the rush to the manger to see what this star that pierces the night sky has come to proclaim. We so desire to believe the Good News of the messengers that is the culmi-

nation of humanity's pain of birth: "don't be afraid" for unto us a sign has come that will be to all people... "on earth, peace."

December 27, 2020

First Sunday after Christmas

Series: I Believe Even When...

Texts: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Luke 2:22-40

Title: Believe This: The Time has Come

Theme: The Good News that we have proclaimed for this Advent/Christmas season ends with a second chapter of Luke that starts, "When the time came..." Yes, the time has come for us to move from the narrative of birthing to the narrative of redemption. The story of Jesus' ritual cleansing as a child contains stories of people who had been waiting for this moment. But the time of waiting is over—for us, too. Like Isaiah who says, "for Zion's sake I won't stay silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still," we will not stop our songs of resistance.



ADVENT

SERIES:

"I BELIEVE

EVEN WHEN..."



from Miller’s Senior Living Community



Quin Chaney

We are proud to announce Quintella Chaney as November's Daily Bingo winner. Quin received a jumbo word search book and was diligent in checking her other fun items. December's bingo numbers every day in Daily Bingo will begin on December 1st.

The residents receive two numbers per day and it often takes the entire month for someone to win. The prize is then designed around items that the individual winner is



“Please go to the www.bremenholywalk.com website for information. A stream link will be sent one week before the tour.”

Bremen Holy Walk Goes Viral!

This year marks the 40th year of the Bremen Holy Walk event. With 2020 being as it is, it has been decided to cancel this year’s Holy Walk in-person event.

But God will not be stopped! Timely as always, God graciously bumped up our presence online! This year, you

will be able to attend virtually via “Bremen Holy Walk” on Facebook. Get ready for a wonderful social media Holy Walk Tour, Friday, December 11 at 7 pm. Gather your family together in your home and journey with us to Bethlehem! Please share this information with your family and friends!

December Birthdays

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 12/1 Eugene Chipman Sr. | 12/16 David Cochern |
| 12/4 Carole Ralston | 12/16 Cindy Flagg |
| 12/6 Bob Heiden Sr. | 12/17 David Hogsett |
| 12/10 Barb Friesner | 12/18 Stacey Patrick |
| 12/11 Kay Finlay | 12/26 Bob Beiter |
| 12/11 Marilyn Rans | 12/29 Ruth Crutchfield |
| 12/12 Patti Bates | 12/30 Linda Langfeldt |
| 12/12 Karen Capper | |



MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM
THE OUTREACH & SUPPORT COMMITTEE



Once again, support and outreach seem like insurmountable goals as we head into the winter

months of 2020 and 2021. Although we are not able to participate in many of our small group gatherings, the FUMC family is encouraged to support and reach out to our church members and others in the community. A kind word, a phone call, a plate of cookies left on the porch....all of these small acts of kindness can spread the goodness of our God.

So, although Cookie Sunday, First Sunday Brunch, The Lunch Bunch, Game Day and other small groups are "on hiatus", our church family still requires your love, support, and outreach. In spite of our fervent desire for life to return to "normal", the small group gatherings cannot comply with safe protocol as mandated by the UMC guidelines, CDC recommendations, and county restrictions.

Blessed Bookies & Bad Girls are taking a December hiatus and will NOT be gathering!!

Again, we want to extend heartfelt thanks to Pastor Toni, Kathy, Jeff, Tom, Cindy, Brian, Kay, Ralph, Katy, Donna, our trio of singers and all those who make it possible for us to worship on Sunday mornings. Our

online presence continues to grow, so we are reaching many who would be unable or unwilling to attend in-person service. We are reminded that the technology that we used to complain about now enables us to maintain contact with those we hold dear.

As we head into the season of celebration for the birth of Jesus, we must continue to give thanks for Christmas. The family gatherings, shopping trips, tree searching, cookie baking and feasts will be different/smaller than in previous years. But, don't let that tarnish our celebration and joy in this season. Perhaps a touch of humor might be useful....



A fifth grade teacher in a Christian school asked her class to look at TV commercials and see if they could use them in some way to communicate ideas about God. Here are some of the results:

God is like **BAYER ASPIRIN** -- He works miracles.

God is like a **FORD** -- He's got a better idea.

God is like **COKE** -- He's the real thing.

God is like **HALLMARK CARDS** -- He cares

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God Delights to Hear from Us by Dorothy Steinke

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

This year has certainly not been what we planned for or expected in many ways; and here we are at Advent - preparing for Christmas. Christmas celebrations and traditions will be much different this year both with family and church family.

My mother was a clipper and a saver. I have an envelope of her clippings that she saved; that I go through when I am looking for something different. These clippings are probably 30 years old or older. Authors are unknown. I would like to share a couple with you:



Tis Not Enough

Tis not enough that Christ was born
beneath the star that shone.

And earth was set that holy morn
within a golden zone.

He must be born within the heart
before He finds a throne

And brings the day of love and good,
The reign of Christlike brotherhood.

Christmas

Christmas is the faith men have in all that

is good in the world;

Christmas is the selfless spirit of doing for
others;

Christmas is laughter and friendship and
the spreading of cheer;

Christmas is the guileless wonder of child-
hood and the light of faith in young eyes on
Christmas morn;

Christmas is the
sweet joy of families
united in person or
spirit;

Christmas is the
tender knowledge
that you are loved
by someone.. and that you have someone
to love;

Christmas is believing in prayer and in the
power that answers it;

Christmas is the right to sing of your belief
in the way of your choice;

Christmas is all the things that free men
fight for.

Let us keep it shining for all the world!

Mission Witness

On Winter Solstice we celebrated light's
return by walking a snow labyrinth. God
goes with us along our human path. As we
meet along this journey, we give space and
grace for each to step into this unique light.

AK Child & Family, Anchorage, Alaska

Outreach & Support Committee continued

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enough to send His very best.

God is like **TIDE** -- He gets the stains out that others leave behind.

God is like **GENERAL ELECTRIC** -- He brings good things to life.

God is like **SEARS** -- He has everything.

God is like **ALKA-SELTZER** -- Try him, you'll like Him.

God is like **SCOTCH TAPE** -- You can't see him, but you know He's there.

God is like **DELTA** -- He's ready when you are.

God is like **ALLSTATE** -- You're in good hands with Him.

God is like **VO-5 Hair Spray** -- He holds through all kinds of

weather.

God is like **DIAL SOAP** -- Aren't you glad you have Him. Don't you wish everybody did?

God is like the **U.S. POST OFFICE** -- Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet nor ice will keep Him from His appointed destination.

Once again, thank you for spreading love, and remember....

God is good....all the time!

God bless you all.

The Outreach and Support Committee:

Susan Wautelet, Carol Beiter, Norma Booker, Betty Kay Eley, Cindy Flagg, Ed Kelso, Bert Rans, Irma Slack, Sarah Smith, Genie Tobias, Beth Pinkerton, and Anthony Witt



“God is like...”



Allstate
You're in good hands.

W.O.W. Members:

To the members who have Secret Prayer Sisters, Donna and I are suggesting you continue as usual with your current prayer sis-

ter. Hopefully, in the new year, we can meet again and start over!

Thanks for your understanding.

Co-Chairpersons: *Donna & Carol*

Need Scrip?

If you are needing scrip, especially for the holidays, please call Deb Jung at 936-8071 and leave a message.

Or go to www.shopwithscrip.com to find out how you can order scrip and have it delivered to your house.



Social Concerns Clothesline Project Update



Hallelujah! We have exceeded the amount of donations needed to cover our Christmas Clothesline Project! Extra funds will be used for the Christmas Clothesline Project in 2021. We will be providing a red Plymouth sweatshirt, a package of socks, a Bible coloring book and crayons to younger children, a hand-knitted hat made by ladies of our church and other ladies in Plymouth, and bags of candy to 58 children, and 1 sleeper to an infant.

Your giving toward agencies that help the needy was also greater last month—over \$1,000! Praise God! That means we can give to Link to Hope, Neighborhood Center and Bread of Life Food Pantry. This will help families in need of assistance for rent, utilities and food at this very critical time.

Your generosity is so heartwarming and shows that our church still has a mission, a reason for existing, and is still serving God! Hallelujah!

December 2020

400 N. Michigan St.
Plymouth, IN 46563

First United Methodist Church
Love God ~ Love Others ~ Serve Others



Phone: 574 936-2943
Email: office@plymouthfirstumc.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Please check with your committee chair to see if you are meeting. All meetings will be Zoom until further notice.		1	2	3	4	5
6 2nd Sunday of Advent	7	8	9 7 pm "Moving Forward" Zoom	10	11 7 pm Virtual "Holy Walk" on Facebook	12
13 3rd Sunday of Advent	14	15 6 pm Finance Zoom	16	17	18	19
20 4th Sunday of Advent	21	22	23	24	25 	26
—OFFICE CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS—						
27 1st Sunday after Christmas	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve 	WISHING YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY 2021!	

Greetings from The Well by Cindy Flagg

“Faith does not protect me from the ugliness of life. It gives me the power to move on.”

I have this quote above my desk at work. The year 2020 has shown me some of the ugliness of life; yet, I have had some wonderful experiences as well.

Through the ongoing events of the pandemic, the political election, the unrest and violence in our country, and other things, the above quote has proved true in my life this year more than ever.

Working in the health care field as I do has proved very challenging this year. I have the best job of all in the nursing care industry. I enjoy nothing more than doing my Activity Director’s job and providing fun, entertaining, and memorable activities for our residents. I have a job description above my desk which asks the question “What is the role of the Activity Department”? And it answers this: “...to assist all residents in developing physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual growth”.

I LOVE that challenge and I take it seriously. When the pandemic began, things changed drastically and we all had to start thinking “outside the box”. I welcomed others’ opinions and ideas of activities that would still meet these needs plus stay within the guidelines set up by the CDC and our corporation. It was different but became our new “norm” as the news media calls it.

This past week things have once again changed because of COVID-19 rearing its ugly head again in the Marshall County area. I’m once again having to re-think how to meet our residents’ needs and yet keep them and myself safe from the virus. We are all tired of this virus and how it has changed our routines and our lives. It isn’t pretty. But we are trying to make the best of an ugly situation. And the entire time I keep the above quote in my mind.

Many people think as Christians we should not have to face any hardships in life. We should be exempt from ugliness and pain. However, this is not what the Bible teaches us. Actually Romans 5:3-5 says

this: “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because GOD’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

It says “we rejoice in our sufferings”...so...you KNOW that we are going to have sufferings and not everything is going to be perfect and calm in our lives. This verse supports the quote I began with... there will be ugliness in life but it is my faith in GOD that gives me the power to move on. I have seen it during this most recent lockdown at our facility. This time on lock down, a part of my job is to go door to door and check every resident’s temperature at the beginning of the day. This new task has been a blessing in disguise. I am sorry we have to do this yet I have enjoyed my little chats and sometimes longer chats with the residents. I’ve learned so much and I can see first-hand what the isolation does to a person over an extended period of time. It is not good for people to be so isolated.

My challenge for you throughout the remainder of the pandemic is that you think of our shut-ins and those who care for them. Pray for residents in ALL nursing care and assisted living facilities. Pray that they can remain calm, anxious free and feel the presence of the LORD and feel the love of their families although they cannot see them or touch them. Please pray for the caretakers and all medical personnel as we continue providing the care your loved ones need and also continue to protect ourselves so we do not take anything home to our families or in to our residents. And remember one thing our residents can do is talk on the phone and they love to receive mail. Consider phoning your friends in the facilities and sending a note or card. It will really brighten a resident’s day and you may just feel better too!

See you at The Well (online),

Cindy Flagg

First United Methodist Church



400 N. Michigan St.
Plymouth, IN 46563

Phone: 574 936-2943

Email:

office@plymouthfirstumc.org

Watch our Sunday Service on
Facebook at 10:30 am:

[https://www.facebook.com/
plymouthfumc](https://www.facebook.com/plymouthfumc)

Bringing in Christmas will look different this year, but it will still happen! We need a few volunteers to read short parts. Readers will record their parts in their homes and share the videos by text to be compiled into a program. If you are interested in participating, please contact the church office by December 3, 2020. We hope you will consider helping to remember and celebrate God's presence with us!

Preaching Plan for Advent and Christmas

November 29, 2020

First Sunday of Advent

Series: I Believe Even
When...

Texts: Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke
1:26-38

Title: I Believe in the Sun:
Hope for Tomorrow

Theme: This Advent, we are
looking to hear some comfort,
some challenge and some
good news. The prophet Isai-
ah and the four Gospel au-

thors were writing in a time
when people needed desper-
ately to hear all these things
as well. This first week, Isaiah
and the writer of Luke reas-
sure the people that good
news is beginning. But Mary
is troubled. Though there is
good news ahead, it can
sometimes be hard to see our
way through here and now.
Mary asks questions, then
trusts the angel's words.

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