



December 2017

The Goodnews Letter

St. Paul United Methodist Church

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umcne.org

From the Pastor's Desk

Maybe it is just me but I think I just helped Melanie take down our Christmas tree about two months ago! We really didn't take it down in September. It was in January but that seemed like yesterday. Perhaps that's because some of us are still trying to learn to use the present we received last year.

I know a family who, for reasons other than just being critical and humbug, skipped Christmas one year and later reported they didn't miss a skip or beat. They read the Christmas stories, went to a Christmas Eve service and gave money to a family in need but, even though they didn't buy themselves any gifts, they enjoyed the holiday as much as ever.

I know, I know, if you have children and grandchildren that is not going to probably happen but I do know the following is true. The older I get the harder I focus on activities and gifts at Christmas, the less I really enjoy Christmas. Some would say I am getting old, am cynical, or have lost the point of Christmas. Some would wonder why I am admitting this.

I believe the LORD is challenging me to refocus my attention on what is Christmas all about! I know we can all say the following.

We already know that Christmas is about Christ. It is about His birth and His love and His arrival the first time and our anticipation of His arrival the second time.

So if we can rattle those explanations off, doesn't that mean that our priorities are in order about Christmas?

Not necessarily. I think I know what Christmas is about as well as any other committed Disciple of JESUS CHRIST in North America. I know what the historical significance of Christmas is about. So do you.

What then, might be missing?

If I know that Christmas is about Christ, how does that impact what I do in December or all the year around? If Christmas seems to be missing something then priorities need to be changed

If your Christmas is just wonderful and you have no deeper sense or longing to experience Jesus, then the rest of the newsletter may not interest you.

Often what we do at Christmas becomes an expected activity placed upon us by tradition and our family's presumptions.

When there is more work than joy in an activity then do we have the courage to change it? That's up to each one of us.

If you have everything really needed for life and daily activities, another gift really isn't needed, yet here are gifts that don't include items being exchanged. You can give people attention, activity together, time, meals, etc. and that is often more meaningful than wrapped gifts.

Recently, our family started to go to a movie on Christmas Day. We find one that is agreeable to us all and off we go! It has been enjoyable to do this together and then talk about the movie at dinner. I am expecting to do that again this year.

The point is this. Never, would I have thought about this 5 plus years ago. This new activity is enjoyable and brings our family together to have conversation. One day its purpose will probably wain. When that happens, we'll do something different.

Faye, a lady In one of my former pastorates, would go to the grocery store in December about twice a week and find strangers there to invite to her home for a Christmas dinner. The number of invitees would range from 10 to 20 and half or so would show up at her Christmas dinner.

She had GOD's grace to spot persons who were lonely and wouldn't have a place to go for Christmas dinner. Her guests were so moved by this generosity, some became life-long friends. Some came back to help in future years. Faye found great purpose in giving to persons who needed this blessing.

In what way can you find a meaningful task to involve yourself in this Christmas season that is new, different, for someone else, for someone who cannot repay you, etc.? Look for those opportunities. They may lead you to seeing Jesus this Christmas in a fresh way as never before.

Merry Christmas to all this year!

Pastor Robert



Your 5th Promise

“I will be a witness.”

Just what does that mean?

The Bible Definition is below

1 Confirmation of a fact or event :testimony. 2 :one that gives evidence; specifically :one who testifies in a cause or before a judicial tribunal. 3 :one asked to be present at a transaction so as to be able to testify to its having taken place. 4 :one who has personal knowledge of something.

If you became a member of St. Paul, you can say in response to part 1. “Yup, I was there and I know I made those 5 promises.” Part 3 says I said it before witnesses. Part 4 says this was a personal experience. In addition, your membership is recorded, so you would have no problem proving what happened. You have witnessed to the truth.

Now you guys would have no trouble witnessing about your dream vehicle, but unless I were looking for the perfect vehicle for myself, your glowing hour long details about this wonderful machine would bore me stiff. If you took me for a drive and it did all the things you said it would do, that would be another matter.

If you claimed to be a Doctor, an occupation that requires hours of study, practice, working under supervision, as well as continually updating knowledge, I would want to see your credentials. I’m a “show me” type of person. Even then you would still have trouble convincing me I would want any part of the technical information you find fascinating. I would want proof of your ability before I asked you for medical advice. Yet without gaining an amazing amount of knowledge, you would never be able to prescribe the medication I might need.

Let’s transfer these examples to the Christian witness. How much has your life changed because you agreed to follow Jesus? What evidence do you have personally that would convince anyone Jesus is who He claims to be? Is He your personal friend? Have you really felt His help when everything seems to be going wrong? Do you give Him credit when everything is going right? Do you believe the Bible is valid? How many times have you read it from cover to cover? How often have you studied it book by book and applied the messages to your life? Have you really learned the joy of experiencing the presence of the Master? If none (or very little) of the above applies to your life, you have very little evidence to offer anyone that it would be worth their while to invite Jesus into their lives!

The trend in many congregations today is to get new church members with things — we have a beautiful sanctuary, a fantastic Family Life Center, great bus/travel program, many and varied programs that teach life skills, (even Bible Studies), a dynamic preacher, inspiring music program (including psychedelic lighting/special guests), friendly people. None of the above makes Christians.

Then why should anyone come to St. Paul UMC? Let’s be painfully honest. It is not because of the “things” we have or the “perfect” people who attend services. Since none of us are perfect, why do we show up? Following Jesus is about recognizing His greatness, letting Him change our lives to something far better than we can accomplish on our own, and worshipping Him. When that becomes fact, we can then truly be His witnesses in New Ellenton and in all the world.



**So the conductor is calling all you witnesses to get on board.
The St. Paul express is ready to roll.**

Betty

Coming in December

Sundays, December 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 9:30 am

All Adult classes will meet in the Bible Class Room. If you would care to join us, please bring your Bible, read and mark the following passages. Bring a note pad and pencil if you want to take notes. Believe it or not, this is the Christmas story.

Revelation 21:16-23	City 4 square 1500 miles
Revelation 4:1-8	John's vision of heaven
John 1:1-4	The Creator
Ezekiel 28:12-18	Eden, the Garden of God
Isaiah 14:11-15	Regarding Satan (Lucifer)
Exodus 25	The Tabernacle
Genesis 1	The Creation
Genesis 2	The Recreation
Genesis 3	The appearance of Satan

Additional Scriptures will be added as the lessons progress.

Sundays, December 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Advent Wreath Messages by Pastor Robert

December 3

10:25 am Announcements
 10:30 am Worship Christmas Concert
 Guest Musician—Tim McClendon

December 10

10:30 am Keith Sweat from Trinity UMC will bring the Christmas Message
 6:00 pm Sanctuary M & M Choir Musical
 Fellowship Hall Special Guest & Goodies

December 15

5:00 pm M & M Christmas Party & Caroling

December 17

10:30 am Adult Cantata "A Song is Born"

December 24

10:30 am Communion
 A very special story "Mary Did You Know"
 4:00 pm Candlelight & Carol Service

December 31

10:30 am Laurie Knapp will bring the Worship Message

Flower Schedule

3. Advent Wreath
 10. Advent Wreath
 17. Poinsettias
 24. Poinsettias
 31.

Church Nursery

3. Toby James
 10. Sandy Webb
 17. Shelly James & Eirene Ferguson
 24. Kathy Moore & Minnie Goodman
 31. Melinda Brinkley & Jane Morris

Acolytes

3. Zoey Hall
 10. Michael Weaver
 17. Michael Ramos
 24. Nolan Akins
 31. J. B. Morrow

Visitation

3. Pastor Robert
 10. Minnie Goodman
 17. Lynn Alexander
 24. Sandy Webb
 31. Minnie Goodman

Ushers

3. Billy Watkins & Bo Herndon
 10. Vince Maglio & Doug Summer
 17.
 24. Randy Stowe & Joe Eubanks
 31. Billy Watkins & Bo Herndon

Lay Assistant

3. Melinda Brinkley
 10. Jimmy Brinkley
 17. Mason Morrow
 24. Charles Goodman, Sr.
 31. Randy Stowe

Offering Accountants

Jimmy & Melinda Brinkley

SS Assembly Refreshment

3. Joy Circle
 10, 17, 24, 31 SS Assembly Group

Communion

December 24 10:30 a.m.
 Minnie Goodman



