



# Weekly Messenger

December 23, 2020

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Holiday Hours/  
Giving

Christmas Eve  
Service Info

Devotional

Back Page  
Info

## "Merry Christmas"

*We Wish You a  
very  
Merry Christmas!*

*Rachelle Heldt*

*Charlotte Ramsey*

*Rev. Don Gotham*

*David Fox*

*Suzy Palmer*

*Sunhwa Hopgood*

*Mer Renne*

*Caitlyn Wilson*



Utica United  
Methodist Church  
8650 Canal Road,  
Sterling Heights, MI  
(586) 731-7667  
[www.UticaUMC.org](http://www.UticaUMC.org)

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## Holiday Office Hours End of Year Giving

It's Christmas time already. The long awaited arrival of the baby Jesus is almost here. That means time off for our office staff!

The office will be closed on Christmas Eve - December 24th and Christmas Day - December 25th.

Don't forget to turn in your Christmas offerings by December 23rd. There is an option on the online giving site to give specifically to Christmas. This link will remain open through December 30th.

End of the year giving mailed to the church, must be received by December 30th to be counted in the 2020 giving year. Any mailed offering that arrives after noon on December 31st will be counted in the 2021 offering. Online giving will be accepted through the end of December 31st and counted in 2020 offering.

The office will be closed on New Year's Eve - December 31st and New Year's Day - January 1st.



# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## Christmas Eve Services

The Christmas Eve Services will be available starting at 9am on December 24th. They will be released first to our YouTube channel. If you have a smart TV with YouTube you can find the services at Utica UMC on YouTube and have them running on your tv. They will also be available to watch on our Website as well as our Facebook page.

I know for many this is not how we would prefer to have our Christmas Eve services, but the joy of having our service online is that you can fit watching it into your schedule. If you have missed an 11pm service, watch it at 11pm. If you are traveling watch it before you leave or after you arrive at your destination. If you don't have time Christmas Eve watch it Christmas morning.

## Christmas Eve at Utica UMC

Christmas Eve is a very special time at Utica UMC. It is the time when we gather together to remember the gift of a Savior, given by almighty God, who through the cross, grants to each of us the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life!

This year has been so very different from past years. However, your Ministry Team has worked very hard to create an on-line Worship experience that is fitting for this great celebration!

The historical Lessons and Carols format forms the basis of our Traditional Christmas Eve Worship this year. Lessons and Carols had its origin at Truro Cathedral (England) on Christmas Eve 1880, when a service of scripture and supporting carols was developed by the Bishop of Truro, F. W. Benson. Some 38 years later in 1918, this format was adapted for Christmas Eve at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, England. The BBC broadcast from King's College helped to popularize the Service of Lessons and Carols, and it was quickly duplicated by cathedrals and small churches throughout the world. The heart of the service continues to this day – that is, the retelling of the Christian's story of faith from the fall of Adam to the coming of the Word Incarnate.

Many of our members and musicians are involved in this very special Worship event, which at its core, are the readings from scripture. Musically, we will begin our time together, enjoying the Gosbells, as they share a recording of a medley of familiar carols. The carols, to which you will be invited to sing along, are past recordings of a full congregation singing mightily with accompaniment from the bells, trumpet, and organ. The Chancel Choir has come together in a safe and socially distant way to individually record their voices, that when combined through the amazing use of technology, produces an anthem that will be treasured for many years to come. Their rendition of "Once in Royal David's City" will be premiered on Christmas Eve – and is not something to be missed. Mer Renne has contributed to this special night by making a new recording of the Christmas favorite, "O Holy Night." She offers an awesome rendition of this Christmas classic. Karen Gilmore spent a significant amount of time mastering the handbell tree to record a stunning version of "Now We Sing of Christmas." This is another Christmas classic presented by ringing the bells with mallets as they hang from a "bell tree."

The traditional candlelight on-line Worship event will be available on Christmas Eve beginning at 9:00am.

Blessings to you and yours this Christmas season!

## Children's Christmas Eve Service

We have come up with a cute Christmas Eve service for the children of our church. This service will be available starting at 9am on December 24th. Please join us for some singing and dancing, a memory game and a story as we learn about the birth of our Savior Jesus.

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## ARE WE THERE YET?

When our children were little, “are we there yet?” was a frequent question in the car. They were always good travelers on trips but on trips to special places like Cedar Point they would grow impatient. I thought about this cry, “Are we there yet?” when thinking about the pandemic. It seems like an exceptionally long time since March. Unfortunately, when looking for the end of Covid as our destination, we are not there yet. When thinking about Christmas, it seems the time is going by so rapidly and I do not know why I feel so rushed. It will be a quiet day, our Son and Daughter-in-law will stop by, but we probably will not see any of the others. Their Christmas gifts are wrapped but will not be opened until 2021. We want to be happy; it is Christmas! The Christ child is coming! But it is supposed to be a time of gathering, a time for hymns, a time to rejoice with family and friends. We will miss much of that this year. It must not have been a good time for Mary and Joseph either. Mary was due any day, but they were required to go to Bethlehem for the census. That must have been a hard journey. Then they had no place to stay, the town was crowded with people and no rooms available. So, they took shelter in a Manger, a place for animals. Did Mary and Joseph say, “Are we there yet?” along the journey? I think we have had about 3 years of 2020, but a new year is coming and a savior, whose birth we will celebrate, albeit quietly without our hymns of praise sung with fervor, without our cries of “Merry Christmas” as we meet in church, without our lighted candles lifted as we sing Silent Night, Holy Night. It was a hard journey for Mary and Joseph, and it ended with praise and thanksgiving in a Manger and brought us a Savior. 2020 and the Pandemic will end and next year we will, God willing, once again join to celebrate the holiest of days. We will say “remember when” and say a prayer of thanks and gratitude to God who brought us through.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice!

Lord we thank you for the gift of a Savior on Christmas day! May we celebrate the birth and pray for peace and the ending of the virus in our world. Be with those who mourn the loss of loved ones this Christmas, those who are alone and isolated, those who are ill and afraid, those who are separated from loved ones. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders, bless them. May these days that separate us from each other only draw us closer to you, our God and Savior. In the name of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate, Amen.

Grace Epperson



# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## Ministry Team:

Senior Pastor  
**Reverend Don Gotham**  
srpastor@uticaumc.org

Ministry Leader Intern  
**Sunwha Hopgood**

## Contemporary Worship Leader

**Mer Renne**  
mer@uticaumc.org

## Music Ministry

**David Fox**  
Organist, Hand Bell & Chancel  
Choir Director  
FoxDavidL@sbcglobal.net

## Communications Director

**Rachelle Heldt**  
rachelle@uticaumc.org

## Secretary/Bookkeeper

**Charlotte Ramsey**  
charlottte@uticaumc.org

## Youth Leader

**Suzy Palmer**  
suzy.palmer@uticaumc.org

## Sunday Morning Child Care

**Caitlyn Wilson**

## Office Hours:

Mon - Thurs 8am-4pm  
Friday 8am-2pm

**Phone: 586-731-7667**

Food Pantry available  
by appointment only.

## Deadline Information:

Items for The Weekly  
Messenger, The Weekly  
Prayer List, or  
Announcements should  
be submitted by  
Wednesday each week.  
Submit to  
charlotte@uticaumc.org  
for announcements and  
prayer list and to  
rachelle@uticaumc.org  
for the Messenger and  
Electronic Sign  
or call the office.

## Our Mission:

Inviting people to rely  
on Jesus to find  
unexpected purpose,  
peace and joy.

## Keeping Connected

Stay in touch with Utica United Methodist Church by checking our website ([www.uticaumc.org](http://www.uticaumc.org)), following us on Facebook (Utica United Methodist Church) or subscribe to our YouTube Channel (Utica Umc).

If you are not signed up for the Weekly Messenger email, you can do so on our website by clicking on the "More" tab and going to "Weekly Messenger" page to sign up now!

We have an account with both Webex and also with Zoom for groups to meet via telephone and video calls.

## Sunday Worship Times:

Find us on Facebook, Website  
or YouTube channel for our  
Sunday Worship Service at  
9am.

At this time we are taking a  
break from in person  
gatherings. Please stay safe.  
Stay home if you are sick.  
Wear a mask when you go  
out. Wash your hands or use  
sanitizer often.

We will follow John Wesley's  
summary of God's directives  
to all people - "**Do No Harm,  
Do Good and Stay in Love  
with God!**"

## Donate Online:

You can donate online with a  
one time gift or set up  
automatic donations!

Visit our website to give now!

**[www.uticaumc.org/e-giving](http://www.uticaumc.org/e-giving)**

If you need assistance, feel  
free to call the office!