

Weekly Messenger

December 13, 2024

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"Christmas Is Coming"

It is here. That most wonderful time of the year. We think of gifts and spend way more than we said we would. I have a per person limit but sometimes I go a little crazy. I see something I think someone would especially love and have to have it. I once would then make it up to everyone so that the same amount was spent on everyone. That sometimes got way out of hand. So, I quit that but now figure everyone will get their year. Now my grandchildren and beautiful, adorable great grandchildren and children are scattered so that means going to the UPS office and mailing packages. Gift giving is a joy I love. Carrying packages and using a walker is not. I love Christmas, the "spirit" of Christmas is contagious with "Merry Christmas" on almost everyone's lips. It can be a joyous time but there are a few Scrooges that show up. I often think of the "Innkeeper" at Christmas. Here was a young couple. a man asking for a room to put his pregnant wife in and the pregnant wife standing there. He couldn't offer them anything except a stable? I guess he gave what he had. Most people don't do that much. My Mother was not perfect, but she never turned away a stranger or a friend. She welcomed anyone who needed a place to stay. From an escaped prisoner to people suddenly homeless she would take in anyone. One time she received head lice as a reward from one and for the other a visit from the Chief of Police. For a few years during WWII, we had a Canadian Soldier who spent his furloughs with us because he had shown up one day looking for relatives with the same name. We were not related but he was invited to stay and for three years spent his furloughs visiting with us. My Mother did not believe that strangers should ever be turned away unless they were Gypsies, she was frightened of Gypsies and told stories of hiding as a child because Gypsies were coming by. Her Mother had 11 children, and I can picture her screaming "Gypsies coming, run and hide and be very quiet."

But once again it is December, and we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus. The birth of one who would come to die for our forgiveness for our sins. A lesson in sacrifice, love and giving. A Savior who would die on a wooden cross. A sacrifice like no other. May we love that little babe and know that he was a gift beyond no other, a gift that would teach us about love and giving. Let us remember in this holy season of Christ's birth to thank God for the gift of life, for the gift of being able to give to others and for the gift of a home and shelter, for the food we eat and for the gift of love so freely given and especially for the gift of forgiveness when we fail to be the people God calls us to be.

Luke 2:6 While they were there the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

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Lord, forgive us when we fail you. Forgive us when we let love of material things rule our lives, forgive us when we do not love our neighbors and strangers. Help us to be the people you called us to be. Be with us this season of giving, and may we remember that you gave us the greatest gift of all, the gift of a small babe that would grow up to be our savior, a gift we can never repay, a gift we carry in our hearts and souls. We praise you and ask for your forgiveness when we fail to be the people you have called us to be. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Grace Epperson

Upcoming Events

- December 15th - Angel Tree Ornament Sale
- December 21st and 22nd - Cookie Walk
- December 24th - Christmas Eve Service 11am and 8pm
- December 29th - 1 service at 9:30am followed by a meal

Why the Nativity?



The timeless message of Why the Nativity? changes lives! An inspiring journey surrounding the most pivotal moment in human history....the birth of Jesus Christ.

Drawing from both the Old and New Testaments, noted pastor, author, and theologian Dr. David Jeremiah provides answers to the most thought-provoking questions surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ.

Join us on December 14th at 1:00 PM in Room 305 for the Saturday Afternoon Movie Matinee.

If you plan to attend, let Bob or Patsy Clark know. We don't want to run out of popcorn.

Sign-up sheets are available.

Christmas Eve

Join us on Christmas Eve at 11am in Fellowship Hall for a family fun service where an impromptu Christmas pageant will occur. Or, join us at 8pm in the Sanctuary for an evening of bells, carols, candlelight and communion. At long last the Christ child shall come! Are you prepared?

Sunday December 29th

On Sunday, December 29th we will be having 1 church service at 9:30 am in the Sanctuary followed by a meal and time of fellowship after service down in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is invited to attend both the service and the meal. There will not be a second service on that Sunday.

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FOR GOD'S GLORY

As of December 10, we still have about \$35,000 in remaining obligations for this year. This includes: \$10,000 for compensation; \$11,000 for utilities & upkeep; \$7,000 for ministries & administration; and \$7,525 for conference pensions & ministry shares.

We are grateful for your faithful giving and extra year-end giving for the Operating Fund. The green letters in the title of this article reflect the progress we have made since November 1 toward meeting our remaining obligations for the year. Our advancement is directly dependent on the contributions we receive each week.

Our financial gifts for the Operating Fund are made for God's glory. By ensuring we meet our annual financial obligations, we glorify God by enabling Utica UMC to serve where God calls us to serve.

We are able to receive contributions in the form of cash, checks, stocks/bonds/mutual funds, etc. We also have e-Giving available for your convenience. If you would like to make a year-end gift of stocks/bonds/mutual funds or a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA for 2024, please consider doing this soon so it will be processed before the end of the year.

Gifts need to be received by noon on December 31 to be included in your 2024 giving statement. However, to enable us to meet our obligations to others before the end of the year, we will appreciate your gifts by December 22, if possible. Gifts received the week of December 29 will also enable us to meet the expenses (e.g., payroll) we will have in the first few weeks of the new year.

Thank you.

UPDATES from the MINI PANTRY

As the cooler weather approaches we are in need of the following items for our Mini Pantry:

Soup
Boxes of Potatoes (any kind)
Cans of Gravy
Boxes of Stove Top Stuffing
Cereal
Pancake Mix and Syrup
Small Jars of Peanut Butter and Jelly

The Mini Pantry Crew.

Remembrance Angel Ornament Sale

We will once again be having an ornament sale in honor or memory of a loved one. Ornaments are sold for \$15 each or 2 for \$25. Order forms will be available at a table in the Narthex along with an example of the ornament. They will be on display in the Narthex or in the side classroom by Fellowship Hall on one of the Angel Trees and can be taken home after service on December 22nd or after the Christmas Eve Service. If you do not want the ornament on the tree, they can be taken home same day as your purchase. All proceeds will go toward our end of year financial obligations. This is the last Sunday to pre-order your ornaments and get your family/friends mentioned in the bulletin insert on Sunday, December 22nd. Any ornaments not sold this week will be available for purchase to take same day during the cookie walk on Saturday, December 21st and Sunday, December 22nd.

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CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK December 21 & 22

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! And, it's nearly time for our Annual Christmas Walk. This means it's time begin thinking about your favorite cookies and treats – both the ones you will bake and the ones you will eat!

The Cookie Walk will be open for the community and congregation on Saturday, December 21 (10 AM – Noon) and for the congregation on Sunday, December 22 (after services). Free will donations will be appreciated. All donations will be used for the many ministries and projects we provide and support.

BAKERS – Sign-up sheets will be available beginning Sunday, December 1 for you to indicate how many cookies you will donate. Your cookies can be dropped off Tuesday, 12/17 thru Friday 12/20 during regular office hours (8 AM – 2 PM). Because the sale is open to the community on Saturday, it is important for your cookies to be dropped-off by Friday, December 20.

SPREAD THE WORD – Please tell your friends and family to come to the Cookie Walk Saturday, December 21 from 10 AM – Noon or Sunday, December 22 after services. If you are a Face Book user, please "Like" our Cookie Walk event or better yet "Invite" your friends and family. Printed flyers are also available at church for you to take and share with others.

COOKIE EATERS – Come fill a container (or two or three) with a variety of delicious cookies – some for yourself and some for your friends and family. Free will donations will be appreciated.

Prayer List Update

Did you know that we have a prayer team called the "Wall Watchers," who have committed to praying everyday for the people on both the published prayer list and for those who don't wish to have their prayers on the prayer list? Marg Mowers heads up this prayer team and does her best to contact those on the prayer list to keep updated on the needs of those listed. Please make sure to reach out to her or to the office to update us on the people you have on the prayer list.

The published prayer list was meant to be a temporary list, for those with urgent prayer needs, with the goal of removing them after 3 months. Unfortunately, here in the office, I have lost track of who went on the prayer list and when, it also just rolled over from the previous year. So, it has been decided that the prayer list is going to start over in January 2025.

Please contact the office if you currently have someone on the prayer list that you would like to keep on the prayer list starting in January. The prayer team and their list will continue on and those people will continued to be prayed over daily even if they are no longer on the published prayer list.

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IS CELEBRATE RECOVERY FOE ME?

You may be thinking that recovery is only for those with alcohol or drug problems. This could not be further from the truth. Celebrate Recovery mentions “recovery from life’s hurts, hang-ups and habits.” But what does this mean? A hurt, habit or hang-up is something in you or your life that hinders your walk with God and others. **THESE LIFE PROBLEMS CAN BE STUMBLING BLOCKS OR STEPPING STONES!**

Hurt: to experience physical pain caused by yourself or another; to feel emotional pain; undergo or experience difficulties or setbacks. The feeling of being hurt is an emotional reaction to another person’s behavior or to a disturbing situation - (e.g., abuse, abandonment, codependency, divorce, relationship issues, etc.)

Habit: regular repeated behavior pattern. An action or pattern of behavior that is repeated so often that it becomes typical of somebody, although he or she may be unaware of it. Addiction, such as an addiction to a drug, food or some other stimuli that deadens ones feelings. A habit is an addiction to someone or something (e.g., alcohol dependency, drugs, food, gambling, sex, shopping, smoking, etc.).

Hang-up: a psychological or emotional problem or fixation about something. An issue that causes persistent impediment or source of delay. Hang-ups are negative mental attitudes that are used to cope with people or adversity (e.g., anger, depression, fear, unforgiveness, etc.)

Healing and growth are possible by applying the principles of Celebrate Recovery to your life!

Join us each Thursday evening at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. Don’t assume that where you were, or where you are, is as good as it gets. *The struggle you’re in today is developing the strength you need tomorrow.*



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SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES:

9:30AM

with Organ, Choir and Handbells
in the Sanctuary

10:30AM

with our Worship Band
in Fellowship Hall

Online Worship

A recorded service will be
available online on
Facebook, our church website and
on YouTube beginning at
9:00am each Sunday.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Friday
8:00am-2:00pm

Mini Pantry

Food and Monetary
Donations are being
accepted.

Suggested foods canned
meat, pancake mixes and
syrup, small peanut butter
and jelly, boxes of
crackers.

Keep Connected

If you are not signed up for our
Weekly Messenger email, you
can do so on our website by
clicking on the "More" tab, then
"Weekly Messenger"; on that
page you will find a place to
register for our weekly email!



*"Like" us
on
Facebook!*

Our Mission

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

Ministry Team

Rev. Don Gotham
srpastor@uticaumc.org

Music Ministry

David Fox, Organist, Bell, & Chancel Choirs
Director

FoxDavidL@sbcglobal.net

Mer Renne, Contemporary
Worship Leader
mer@uticaumc.org

Communications Director/Bookkeeper

Rachelle Heldt
rachelle@uticaumc.org

Deadline Information

Announcement Loop/Vertical TVs—

End of day on Tuesday each week
Messenger Articles and Prayer List by

Noon on Wednesday each week.

Announcement made during service
by 1pm Friday

E-mail rachelle@uticaumc.org or
office@uticaumc.org

E-Giving

Going on vacation; can't make it to church?

How about using E-giving so you can still give your offering for
those times when you can't be here **The E-giving tab is on our
church website: www.uticaumc.org**
If you need assistance, call the church office.

Celebrate Recovery, Thursday, 6:30pm

