



# The Methodist Messenger

## PASTOR'S NOTES

Almost every day since our family has been here, I been asked questions about whether we are settled in our new home, or how we like being here in Whiteville. I have to say that both Claudia and I feel blessed to be here and to begin a new chapter in ministry with our Whiteville UMC Church family. I have to say thank you to everyone for making us feel so welcomed and at home. Thank you also for being patient with our little Jonathan. He is a bundle of energy and thinks the world was built for him to explore.

For my newsletter message I thought it might be good to tell a little about myself and so that we can begin to get to know each other better. One of the things I like to do on my Sabbath day, in my spare time, is to work with pottery. I've been doing this for a few years now and for me, there's just something meaningful about taking something as common as clay (dirt) from the earth, and using it to create something useful, something beautiful, even something that might be used for holy purposes.

The creation story in Genesis teaches that **"The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."** When I read that passage I have to think that God must have been something of a potter too. Or at least, that one aspect of God's essential nature is to create. **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** And then when God created humankind and breathed his life into us, I believe part of God's nature was imparted to us. As God said, **"Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness."** I believe that we all have in us a spark of God's nature (His image and likeness) that invites us also to be creative. That creativity comes out in different ways, with different people. Sometimes in the work that we do, sometimes in our hobbies, and even sometimes in our day to day chores.

*What are some ways that you can see that divine creative spark in your own lives?*

Working in pottery is a creative outlet for me but it also fits nicely into my view of theology. How many of you believe that God can take an ordinary person, and form and shape them into something useful, something beautiful, even something that might be used for holy purposes. We all do, right? That's part of why we come to church and Sunday School. We are hoping to be formed and shaped for God's holy purposes. That's exactly how I feel when I sit at the pottery wheel and start to form and shape something beautiful from the 'dust of the ground.'

One of the things I enjoy making the most are communion sets which I can give away to pastors and churches. I remember the first communion chalice I ever made. It was kind of small and pitiful looking, at least compared to my more practiced work, but then we all have to start somewhere. I had formed it with a coil of clay that wrapped around the stem like a vine, and that joined with some grapes and leaves also formed on the cup. Unfortunately, the vine dried out too quick and part of it cracked and fell off. The instructor helped me stick it back on with some glaze and we fired it in the kiln to see what would happen. Unfortunately, the broken piece slid a little and the crack was obvious. Even so, the cup itself was sound and certainly would hold the juice (the blood of Christ) that reminds us of our debt to Jesus. I ended up giving that chalice to a friend of mine who was leaving the ministry to try and save his marriage. I reminded him that God can redeem broken vessels (both human ones and those made of clay) and still use them for holy purposes. Maybe you know some folks out there who are feeling a bit broken and useless. Remind them that God loves all, including the broken, and he is certainly able to redeem all who are willing to surrender to him.

**Heavenly Father, By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God), now and for ever. Amen**

## STAFF

Rev. James Howard,  
Pastor

Morgan Simmons,  
Secretary

Chalmers Waddell,  
Custodian

Gus Cothorn,  
Music Director

Nan Leggett,  
Organist

Geneva Ashley,  
Pianist



## STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Thanks to a generous donor at year-end we finished the year with excess offerings of \$7,239. Conference Apportionments were paid in full. Fortunately expenditures were only 90% of the budget, due mainly to the vacant Pastor's position. Offerings in 2022 were \$33,645 less than our 2023 budget, so we will have some pressure to grow this year. Copies of the 2023 budget are available in the Narthex and church office.

Sunday morning attendance averaged 57, the same as last year. Average attendance was slightly better than 2021 when you factor in three 2021 Sunday events that resulted in over 100 in attendance. The events were pre-school and Boy Scouts programs.

The pledge campaign resulted in a disappointing 16 pledges for a total of \$80,180. This is 45% less than last year. Some have said they did not pledge due to the pending disaffiliation issue. Deaths and folks relocating also reduced the response. We need volunteers to assist chairperson, Carlton Williamson, with the 2024 pledge campaign.

January offerings were 10% less than last year. However, average Sunday attendance was 59, up 18 from last January.

Thank you for your faithful stewardship.

Tom Leggett, Finance Chairperson

*“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.” Matthew 6:34*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb. 6th—United Women in Faith 6:30 p.m.
- Feb. 9th— Blood Drive 2:00-6:30 p.m.
- Feb. 9th— Caregiver Support Group 1:00 p.m.
- Feb. 12th— Called Church Council meeting after worship service
- Feb. 18th— United Women in Faith Mission Study 8:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m

## UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

We are so excited to have increased attendance in the last few months! We welcome all new members and those that have been participating faithfully for a long time! We have been having fun doing projects to benefit people in the community. We put together Bedtime Blessing Bags for the Whiteville Police Department to give to children who have to be removed from their homes due to unsafe circumstances. They contained sheets and blankets, teddy bears, and other items they might need. We made gift bags for the staff at Families First which included devotion books, bookmarks and chocolate! At our February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting we will be making Valentine bags for all the staff at Edgewood Elementary School. We have resumed taking meals to the Hospice Angel House every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month.

Our officers for this year are as follows: Debbie Conway, president; Beverly Justice, vice president; Vickie Pait, secretary; Sue Lennon, treasurer. We would like to thank Carolyn Hankins for doing such a wonderful job as treasurer for so many years! She will be greatly missed! We are pleased to have Sue Lennon as our new treasurer.

Our annual Frozen Soup Sale is underway. We have 6 delicious homemade soups to choose from. Order forms are available in the church office and the narthex. Please return orders by February 19<sup>th</sup>. Pickup dates are Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> from 10 – 12 :00.

Our Harbor District Women in Faith will have 2 missions studies coming up. We will be hosting the first one- February 18<sup>th</sup> and on March 4<sup>th</sup> at Harbor United Methodist Church. If anyone would like to attend, any officer can get you a registration form- due by Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> .

Debbie Conway, President



## DEVOTION TIME

My, mine, and that's mine, too

Toddlers at play say, "That's mine" and grab it back, gathering their toys close around them saying: "These are all mine, and you can't have any." Then, our parents teach us the lesson to share our toys with others. As adults, though, we sometimes sound more like toddlers saying: "This is my money, my church, my neighborhood, my savings; this is all mine, and you can't have any."

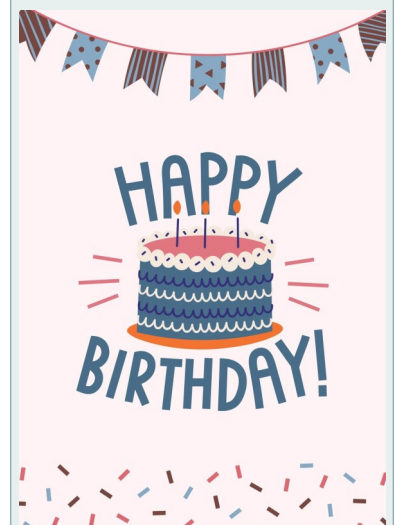
As mature Christians, we should realize that everything we have is a gift from God. He breathed life into our bodies, knows the number of hairs on our heads, and the number of days in our lives (Genesis 2:7; Luke 12:7; Job 14:5 NIV). "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17). As Christians, we are His, and He is ours. We need to seek His will, ask with a pure heart and pure motives, and remember the admonition in James 4:1: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

As we live through a season of change for our church, may we remember that the most precious gift we have is the gift of our salvation through belief in Jesus Christ. We have the gift of God's Word in the Holy Bible. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us understand the Word and guide us. We have the gift of prayer to deepen our relationship with God. We have the gift to proclaim: He is My God, and I am His. We are to share that Good News with others so all may come to know and follow Jesus. May it be our prayer that God's will be done and not our own.

– Judy, a sister in Christ

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 7<sup>th</sup> Debbie Sellars  
Dick Simms  
Jennifer Williamson
- 8<sup>th</sup> William Delaney
- 9<sup>th</sup> Dixie Batten
- 14<sup>th</sup> Forrest Williamson
- 18<sup>th</sup> Deanna Dew Duncan
- 19<sup>th</sup> Wanda Diefes
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Daphne Delaney  
Linda Overcash
- 24<sup>th</sup> Hackney Deans



## FOOD PANTRY

The WUMC Food Pantry will be accepting donations of non-perishable food items throughout the month of February. This list consists of our most needed and most used food items. We appreciate all donations, however, please make sure donations are not outdated. Thank you for your love and support.

- ◆ Corn
- ◆ Green Beans
- ◆ Canned Chicken
- ◆ Vienna Sausages
- ◆ Mac & Cheese
- ◆ Rice
- ◆ Saltines
- ◆ Ramen Noodles
- ◆ Pinto Beans

For questions please contact the church office or Beth Bullard. Thank you once again for your love and support of this community ministry.



## NURTURE COMMITTEE

After putting up the Chrismon tree in late November and taking it down in January, some of our members along with others in the church helped with the soup and sandwich lunch held after the church service on January 8<sup>th</sup> to welcome Pastor Howard and Claudia and Jonathan.

We will be preparing a bereavement meal for the family of our dear Ann Worthington on Tuesday, Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>. Soon we will begin planning for the Lenten lunches which will be held a week after Ash Wednesday. The Lenten services and lunches will begin on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Debbie Conway, Chair



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Greetings and Happy 2023

The 50 Plus Exercise class continues to meet on Tuesday and Thursday at 10am. Sabra Allen, one of our members continues to walk on sunny days after our indoor workouts. Some days others join her. Hats off to Sabra Allen for inspiring us to keep moving.

Red Cross Blood Drive is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 9, 2:00-6:30 pm. Thanks to all who have volunteered to donate!

We are all invited to a birthday bash to help Jan Avant celebrate and launch her 75th year around the sun on Friday, Feb. 3, at 4 pm. Everyone is invited. If you can't come drop her a card or note by the office.

Columbus Regional Health Care, Donayre Cancer Center and Atlantic Dermatology have invited WUMC to host a cancer screening event May 18, 5:30-7:30 pm, which is National Cancer Screening month.

The Caregiver Support Group continues to meet the second Thursday each month in the Parlor. The next meeting will be Feb. 9, at 1pm.



Patricia Ray  
Parish Nurse

## OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Selma Adevu has completed her medical school training to become a doctor in Ghana. Our church has given her financial support for the past three years as she worked successfully to achieve good grades while helping other students in her class do well. Her letter, with the good news, is attached.

A new group for Columbus County, Caregivers Support Group, has been meeting in the Church Parlor the second Thursday of each month at 1:00 since November. See the flyer in this newsletter for details on this group.

A book dispensing machine for Edgewood School is a work in progress as a grant is sought to provide the machine. Vickie Pait is working with Joy Proctor at Edgewood on the best way to apply to the manufacturer for a grant. We may be involved in providing books to stock the machine when it arrives.

Ten "Bedtime Blessing Bags" were donated to the Whiteville Police Department. These are to be immediately available to a child being removed from an unsafe home environment. About 100 children were removed from such situations last year. Each duffel bag contains twin sheets, a blanket, towel and washcloth, a toiletry kit, a bedtime book and a teddy bear. (The UWF shopped for, funded and assembled the bags.)

The Outreach Committee once again sponsored families from our church's Angel Tree to provide Christmas gifts for children.

Due to my brother's illness, it was necessary for me to be in Chapel Hill the better part of this month. Now home, I'm "playing catch-up"! Carolyn Hankins has graciously provided the files she has for the various projects in which the Outreach Committee is involved and/or has supported over the years. We thank her for the excellent work she has done with this committee and in our community through the years.

Watching God Work!

Kathy G. Simmons



***Mark 16:15*** - *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

## LETTER OF THANKS

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Hankins,

Greetings from Korle-Bu,

I trust you are both good and staying healthy and also have an enjoyable Thanksgiving. It's perhaps your Thanksgiving in Whiteville if your plans to relocate and be closer to family is on course. I am most delighted to write to you and announce to you that I am out of Med school after writing my final paper on November 16. What can I say unto the Lord? All I can say, is "Thank you, Lord"! I am actually just lost for words to describe your generosity and lovingkindness. You have been a pillar of support these past 4+ years. We just cannot thank you enough! You together with the Whiteville UMC have been excellent supporters.

It has not been an easy journey....Sleepless nights, hours of studies and lots of sacrifices have gone into it but your support and prayers have made it possible. It will indeed be a proud moment for us all when I get called out at graduation. Each and every sacrifice you

have made has paid off with my successful completion of Med school. Thank you again and again for seeing me through.

The distance between our homes may be great, but our hearts remain closely united. I'm grateful for many things, but I am most thankful for you both.

I guess the biggest Thanksgiving gift for you and I am sure you'll love it most is to let you know on this Thanksgiving Day our results are out and I have been successful. I am now Dr Selma Adevu.

Enjoy the day and take a toast in my name.

Happy happy Thanksgiving

Shalom

Selma



# WHITEVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Rev. Howard James, Pastor

Mrs. Morgan Simmons, Administrative Assistant  
Monday-Thursday/8:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.  
12 noon-12:30 p.m. Lunch

Mr. Chalmers Waddell, Custodian  
Monday-Friday/ 7:30-12:30 a.m.

Ms. Tammie Anderson, Treasurer  
Friday/4:00-6:00 p.m. (or later)

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