

CONNECT To GOD

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December 2019

Paula's Pondering

The last few days have been pretty spectacular by late November standards, so I've been spending as much time as I can outside cleaning up gardens and preparing them for winter. I love working outside in the fall. For one thing, there are no bugs to speak of, so I'm not pestered by mosquitoes, and I don't have to worry about ticks and chiggers. I also don't have to worry about coming across a snake (never a fun thing, though probably pretty entertaining for anyone watching me trying to get away!). The temperatures have been cool enough that "working up a sweat" is a good thing. But the best thing about fall clean up in the gardens is that they stay cleaned up for a good long while. In spring and summer, a few days after weeding the garden you have to do it again, but one good clean up in the fall lasts all the way till March or so.

But as much as I love fall, it's always a reminder that winter is on the way. As a kid, I loved winter; but the older I get, the less I enjoy it. I am more sensitive to the cold, now. And the cold sets off aches and pains that I'd just as soon not have to deal with. I'm also more susceptible to falls and the resulting injuries. And, of course, the snow and ice make commuting a nightmare. So now I dread winter and dream of warm, tropical beaches. The Sorensens, Mary Branstad, and other snowbirds I know are my heroes, and I hope someday to be like them!

But I realize that I like having four distinct seasons. Each season has its delights as well as its detractions. Spring is beautiful with its flowers, warmer temperatures, and budding trees. But it's a nightmare for allergy sufferers, the storms of spring can get downright scary, and all the bugs, spiders, and snakes come out and the weeds start to grow. Summer has outdoor sports and swimming, picnics and s'mores, and long days of sunshine. But it also comes with oppressive heat and humidity, all kinds of

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creepy crawlies, and weeds that will take over if you don't stay on them. Fall has cooler temperatures, the harvest, and beautiful leaves. But the weather can change from short sleeves and shorts weather to winter coats and gloves weather in a matter of hours. And winter isn't just a sloppy, slushy mess. The snow can soften the landscape and make the trees look magical. And the colder temperatures and shorter days allow for a time of rest and renewal and catching up on my reading.

So I am resolved this year to change my perspective of winter. I still don't like the cold, nor do I like snowy or icy commutes. But I'm going to focus on the beauty of winter. I'm going to relish the time of rest for my gardens, and my time of rest *from* my gardens. I'm going to enjoy the magical image of trees encased in ice sparkling like diamonds in the sunlight. I'm going to put my slippered feet up near the fire as I drink my hot chocolate and plan next year's garden. I'm going to take joy in God's gift of winter. I hope you will too.

Blessings,
Pastor Paula



P.S. This seems like the perfect time to remind you of St. Mark's winter weather policy. During the week, whenever the Independence School District cancels school because of the weather, our office is closed as well. Individual groups (Dominoes, choir, the food pantry, and the clothes closet, etc) may choose to meet, so, if you are part of those groups be sure to contact the group leader. If it is determined that we cannot reasonably insure the safety of those coming to worship, we will cancel or delay the worship service. A "robo-call" will be sent out and the 4 local news stations will notified. We will also post the cancellation on our Facebook page and our website. If worship is cancelled, I will make every effort to record the sermon on Facebook Live. Even if we choose to have worship, please use your best judgment. If you don't feel safe or comfortable traveling to worship, don't come.

Cancelling a worship service is devastating to our finances because most people forget to bring their offering the following week to make up for the cancelled Sunday. All our expenses and financial obligations continue, even when we have to cancel a worship service, but, of course, we have no income for that week. Please remember to support the church, even on the Sundays we don't gather as well as the Sundays you are absent.

Upcoming Events

- 11/30 Church Christmas Decorating
- 12/7 Salvation Army Bell Ringing
- 12/8 Communion
- 12/13 Boy Scout Overnight
- 12/24 Christmas Eve Service
- 12/25 Christmas and Church Christmas Dinner

Birthdays

December

- 12/12 Cathy Boyd
- 12/18 Janice Callahan
- 12/12 Marvin Roberts
- 12/12 Christian Bell
- 12/20 Lisa Elliott



Sunday Sermons

- 12/1 Finding Joy in the Darkness - Hope.....Habakkuk 3:17-19; Psalm 30:5; Jeremiah 31:13
- 12/8 Joy: Joy for the Lowly.....Luke 1:39-44, 46-49, 52-53
- 12/15 Joy: The Joy We Can't Yet.....Matthew 1:18-24
- 12/22 Joy: Good News of GreatLuke 2:8-20
- 12/29 Seeking the KingMatthew 2:1-12

Phone Prayer Chain

If you know of a member going to the hospital, have a need, a concern, or a joy, please call someone on the following list, starting at the top, if possible. Call any time, day or night. If the person you call is not at home, leave a message or call the next person on the list.

Prayer Chain



- Pat Townsend 373-3915 or 225-9459
- Rosemary Garten 427-5725 or 519-8500
- Carol Marcks 427-5725 or 560-5627
- Marilyn Berry 796-5789
- Lucille Bolen 560-5131
- Mary Branstad 796-9659 or 868-3752
- Ann Fiene 257-5214
- Jackie Leffingwell 257-1123
- Linda Roberts 650-5131 or 853-3398

- Carol Buhrlé 796-3630 or 225-8174
- Shirley Weaver 461-9224 or 716-1184
- Chris Pauley 571-3922
- Gayle Elliott 257-9655
- Arletta Cahill 600-9203
- Flora Costanza 914-8034
- Sandy Bower 373-5603
- Anna Inman (660) 232-1221
- Jackie McMenemy 461-7577

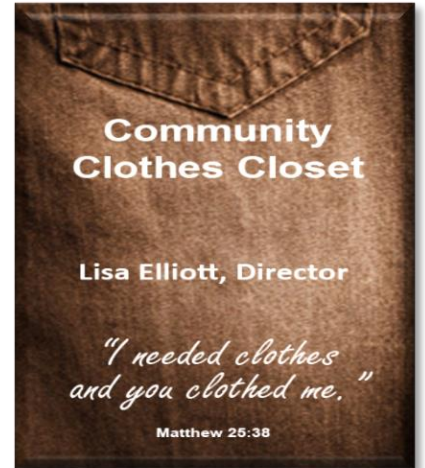
Bread Of Life Food Pantry

The Food Pantry and Clothes Closet are open:

Monday 9—NOON
 Wednesday 3—5:00pm

2019	FAMILIES	PEOPLE	ITEMS OUT	ITEMS IN
OCT	37	146	1076	1989

Heidi Maurice, Director



Website: <http://stmumc.net/outreach-ministries/food-pantry-clothes-closet/>

UMM Minutes

Seven (7) in attendance for the **November 9** meeting. Last meeting minutes and treasury report were approved. Treasury balance is \$4,502.72.

Old Business: Salvation Army Bell Ringing is Saturday, December 7, 2019 at J.C. Penny's on 39th Street. Old Business was approved.

New Business: Vice President Joseph Brison resigned due to a new job. No new outreaches at present time. Christmas Dinner is 12/25/2019 (Potluck Style – Buhrl family will furnish meat). New Business was approved.

Next Meeting is December 14, 2019. Brisons, Buhrls & Bolens are cooks for next meeting. Craig Bolen will give devotional.

No testimony this month. Joshua Brison gave devotional (Wisdom in Times of Trouble). Craig Bolen closed in prayer and adjourned meeting at 9:52am.



Bell Ringing

at J.C. Penney on 39th Street

1-HOUR SHIFT	NAME	NAME
10am - 11am	Craig Bolen	Lucille Bolen
11am - NOON	Shirley Weaver	Ruth Payne
NOON - 1pm	Flora Costanza	Beckie Stark
1pm - 2pm	Shirley Weaver	Anna Inman
2pm - 3pm	Ann Fiene	Lisa Elliott
4pm - 5pm	Cathi Markley	Curtis Sanders
5pm - 6pm	Carol Marcks	Rosemary Garten
6pm - 7pm	Jackie Leffingwell	Jennifer Love
7pm - 8pm	Bob Buhrl	Carol Buhrl

Saturday December 7 10am - 8pm



The Meaning of Christmas

With the most popular holiday just around the corner, it seems like everyone is trying to get into the Christmas spirit. Stores are lining their aisles with Christmas goodies and decor, TV shows have switched to the theme of giving and love, and Santas are starting to float about. And why shouldn't they, after all it is that time, the meaning of the season, right?

Yet, the very first Christmas seemed to do without all of these. The very first Christmas somehow started a frenzy without the power of TV, without Candy Canes, without Santa, and without Christmas sales. Even more amazingly, the very first Christmas involved a poor couple, nobodies, who would lay the most precious child of all in a manger. ([Luke 2:4-7](#))

Looking back on Black Friday, I am constantly reminded how far we have come from the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas wasn't just about giving, or feeling loved, but it was about true love. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ, the Savior who came into this world to die... for everyone, even those who killed him. (Romans 5:8) Jesus was God's gift not to the deserving, not to the Jews, but to everyone. ([Colossians 3:11](#))

Yet on Black Fridays, you hear about a Walmart worker being killed because people couldn't wait to save a few dollars here and there. Another person is killed over a toy. And just a few years back, the Tickle Me Elmo fiasco brought out the worst in people. People who seem to have forgot that love isn't hurting another to give your child what they want, but rather to do what is right and moral. (1 Corinthians 13:6) And they seem to have forgotten that Christmas isn't just about showing love for those you care for, but for those who are undeserving, and those you do not even know. Just as God came to die, for those who were undeserving, and those who He did not know in a spiritual relationship. ([Luke 13:25](#))

Today, let us remember the true meaning of Christmas... Peace on Earth, Good will toward Men, for the Savior has come to show us how to love, and to give us the greatest gift of love. (John 15:13) Instead of buying fancy toys, think of how you can give to those who would normally go without. Ask yourself how you can help out others who are not as fortunate as you. Show them the true meaning of Christmas, the gift of God's love (John 13:34), and love others as God first loved you. ([1 John 4:19](#))