



THE GOOD NEWS

Lake Gibson United Methodist Church

To be a joyful church family that is crucial to our community



From the Pastor

We see the signs in yards everywhere, "Jesus is the reason for the season," yet many in the world doubt His word and question His followers. Is Jesus really the reason for the season, or is it something more sinister – like the greed of retailers, or the selfishness of those wanting presents, or perhaps the guilty consciences of those who have hurt their loved ones in the past, or even people just wanting to show off?

If Jesus is the real reason for the season, wouldn't Christmas be different? If Jesus was the reason, shouldn't all the gifts be His? If Jesus was the reason, wouldn't the marginalized and poor have first place at the table? Wouldn't there be acceptance of all people in our gatherings if Jesus was the reason? Also, if Jesus is the reason for the season, wouldn't the season be never-ending? He is the same yesterday, today and forever, isn't he? So the season would be a way of life, not a few weeks or days a year.

If Jesus was the reason for the season, would our family gatherings look different? Maybe the table needs to be bigger and loaded with different types of food, the music more diverse, and acceptance and forgiveness of others more real and open. If Jesus were really the reason for the season, shouldn't churches be filled to capacity and wouldn't worship be dynamic, exciting, invigorating and inspiring? If Jesus was the reason for the season, how would your life and your Christmas celebration change?

Think on the flip side of this question. If Jesus is not the reason and if Jesus did not come from heaven, then we are all in big trouble. There would be no forgiveness of sin, no redemption, no hope of resurrection, no eternal life, – if Jesus did not come to earth and is not the reason for the season, there would be no CHRISTMAS. Look at the name of the season – CHRISTmas. If Jesus was not the reason, Christmas would all be made up fiction.

HALLELUJAH!!! PRAISE GOD!!!

JESUS DID COME AND HE IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!!!

This year – let's pray that Jesus will be the reason for the season in our communities. This year may we allow Jesus to fill our lives with His love, mercy and grace, and may it overflow into all the world until they, too, know HE IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

Merry Christmas!!!

Pastor Steve

Date Day December Events as of 11/28/2021

(Entries marked with * repeat every week and are only listed for the first occurrence)

- 1 Wednesday **United Methodist Women (UMW) joint circle meeting**, 10:30 am, Family Life Center (FLC), Christmas luncheon (finger food) afterward. All women are invited. (Read chapter 4 of *Never Alone* by Max Lucado); **Choir practice***, 6:30 pm, Sanctuary
- 2 Thursday **Food Pantry** open, 9:30 - 11:30 am, office; **Bible Study* with Pastor Steve**, 1:00 pm on Zoom; **Praise team practice***, 6:30 pm, Sanctuary; First UMC's Zoom **Workshop #2 on Dementia**, noon (see article in November newsletter)
- 3 Friday **Deadline to register for CROP Walk 2022 video conference** (see article)
- 4 Saturday **Come to Bethlehem display, December 4 - 27, 6:00 - 10:00 pm**
- 5 Sunday **Sunday School classes***, 9:15 - 10:15 am in FLC; **Second Sunday of Advent, Communion; Worship Service***, 10:30 am; **Publix bakery goods** in FLC for needy*; **Hispanic Church***, 1:00 pm, FLC;
- 6 Monday **December 6 - 11, Zoom series of webinars on Climate Justice (CJ)** (see article for details); **first CJ webinar at 2:00 pm** (CJ as a global movement)
- 7 Tuesday **Second CJ webinar, 2:00 pm** (theological reflection on CJ); **CROP Hunger Walk video conference, 8:00 pm**, introduction to CROP Walk, its purpose and impact
- 8 Wednesday **Merry Matters Workshop**, 10:00 am to noon, FLC, repeats 2nd and 4th Wednesdays; **CJ webinars, 10:00 am** (frontline communities); 2:00 pm (indigenous climate and water justice)
- 9 Thursday **StillnMission (Missionaries) Christmas celebration videoconference**, 9:00 am; **CJ webinar, 2:00 pm** (transitioning from dependence on carbon fuels)
- 10 Friday **Dementia webinar on Zoom**, 10:00 am, by First UMC Lakeland; **Christmas Extravaganza** at Neighborhood House of Ministry, 5:00 - 7:00 pm (see article)
- 11 Saturday
- 12 Sunday **Third Sunday of Advent; HARVEST SUNDAY** (please bring canned or dry goods and paper grocery bags for our food pantry)
- 13 Monday
- 14 Tuesday **Eat, Pray, Grow webinar** (FL Conference Creation Care topic), noon
- 15 Wednesday Call for January 2022 newsletter articles
- 16 Thursday ~~**A Little Bit of Heaven Board meeting**~~ [Next meeting January 13, 2:00 pm]
- 17 Friday
- 18 Saturday **United Methodist Men (UMM) meeting**, 9:00 am, FLC, **Spadafora Memorial Garden clean up, 9:00 - noon, with lunch afterward**. Please bring your gardening tools.
- 19 Sunday **Fourth Sunday of Advent; *Christmas Concert, 10:30 am***
- 20 Monday
- 21 Tuesday
- 22 Wednesday **Merry Matters Workshop**, 10:00 am to noon, FLC; **Articles for January newsletter due**
- 23 Thursday
- 24 Friday **Christmas federal holiday celebrated; *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 6:00 pm***
- 25 Saturday
- 26 Sunday ***Christmas***
- 27 Monday ~~**UMW Leadership Team meeting**~~ [Next meeting January 10, 11:00 am, FLC]
- 28 Tuesday
- 29 Wednesday; 30 Thursday; 31 Friday ***New Year's Day* federal holiday celebrated**

Help Wanted

[Repeated Due to Overwhelming Lack of Response]

Pick Up Bakery Items from Publix

We need more people to pick up Publix bread donations from the store at Lake Gibson Shopping Center on US 98 North. The donations are ready for pickup at or just before 10:00 pm. Once the boxes are loaded into your vehicle, they are delivered to the church office conference room where the price and bar codes are blacked out.

We have two opportunities to pick up baked goods. On Saturday night, this is done by Sandy Stanfield and Dave McPherson. On Wednesday night two teams alternate pickup, with Lynn Meske and Tom Burns handling the first and third Wednesdays, and Dwight and Phyllis Kitchens doing the second and fourth Wednesdays.

Our goal is to recruit enough teams of 2 people so each team serves one night a month.

This is a vital church mission. The bakery items delivered on Wednesday night are given out at the Thursday morning food pantry. Any items left after food pantry are taken to other charities. The Saturday night pickup is put out in the FLC for anyone who wants to pick up items and deliver them to needy people. Please call Lynn Meske at 863-858-3589 or 906-360-8231, or Phyllis or Dwight Kitchens, 863-984-4564 or 410-790-4422 to learn more.

Audio/Visual Help Still Needed

The church needs **back-up/substitute people** to serve in the sound booth when one of the “regulars” is away. Training will be provided. We would love to have a **roster of people so each could work one Sunday per month.**

. We also need someone on Sunday mornings in church to prepare slides for Praises and Prayers. Does not have to be located in the sound booth. If you would like to learn more about these vital services, call the office (863-858-5431) to set up a time to learn what is required. Thank you!

Hope House Needs Volunteers

If you would like to **volunteer at Hope House or cook and deliver a meal**, please contact the current teams who serve there:

Tuesdays, 10:30 am to 2:00 pm

Debbie and Rick McLellan, 863-327-2893

Wednesdays, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm

Geri Mayo, 863-589-3329 and Laura Webb

Fridays and Saturdays, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm

Luz Selenia Figueroa

If you would like to donate supplies, please drop them off on one of the days and times listed above. A list of Hope House needs is elsewhere in this issue. Extracts from Hope House volunteer reports are at the end of this newsletter. They give you an idea of the volunteer activities, types of meals served, to-go food provided for the evening meal and supplies needed by people who live in tents.

Reminder: Rummage Sale Will Be January 28 and 29, 2022

Mark your calendars for **Friday, January 28th** (9:00 am to 3:00 pm), and **Saturday, January 29th** (9:00 am to 2:00 pm) for our rummage sale. Setup will be on Thursday, the 27th. For church members and constituents, serving at these sales builds relationships. The sales provide needed clothing, shoes, kitchenware, electronics and other items at low prices for our customers. Income from the sales is used by the United Methodist Women to fund charities largely in our local area that receive low or no funding from other sources.

As we did last year, we are **NOT ACCEPTING LARGE PIECES OF FURNITURE** due to limited demand for it, lack of space to store large items, and unwillingness of other charities to accept unsold items.

We are accepting donations now. Deliver them to the office if they're small; otherwise, call Lynn Meske (863-858-3589) or Tom Burns to arrange for delivery.

Mission Moments

Sox Box is Back!

For several years Lake Gibson UMC has collected sox which we give to any neighbor, friend, homeless person or anyone who needs them. Many people need sox for warmth, health and comfort. This is one way we can share God's love through action. We need sox for men, women and children.

There will be a **Sox Box in the narthex from November 21st through December 12th.** You can also drop off sox in the church office Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. We'll package individual pairs of sox in reclosable plastic bags labeled **man, woman or child.** Packaged sox will be hung on a clothesline outside the Family Life Center (FLC) and on the bushes by A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center from December 6th until the 17th.

Any sox left after December 17th will be given to Hope House, Padgett Elementary School, Wendell Watson Elementary School and others.

Your support in the past has been great, and I am looking forward to another good year for this "Pick a Pair" project.

Art Project for Visiting Children

I've been posting articles and news for and about United Methodist Women on the bulletin board just inside the FLC doors. I am going to borrow an idea from Habitat for Humanity. Their December magazine featured drawings by children of their homes.

Since some of you will be hosting children and grandchildren (or great grandchildren) over the holidays, I thought it would be a fun project for you to have your little ones draw pictures of their homes. If you give them to me I will post a some of the drawings on the bulletin board.

Have the child's first name and age on the picture. Maybe it will give meaning to the phrase "Home for the Holidays".

"Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore." Psalm 93:5
(NASB)

Wishing all of you a blessed Christmas,

Linda Alvarez, Missions Coordinator

Editorial Policy

The articles contained in *The Good News* express the opinions of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect policies of the United Methodist Church or of Lake Gibson United Methodist Church.

The purpose of the newsletter is to foster better communication of ideas and opportunities for worship and service among LGUMC members and friends as we seek to share God's love and make disciples of Jesus Christ. All members and constituents are encouraged to write articles and share their thoughts and photos with the congregation.

Phyllis Kitchens, Editor

Prayer Ministry



“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)

Dear Jesus, as we prepare for your birthday celebration let us keep your spirit alive within us.

Every day you show what Christian love is about through your prayers, compassion, concern, warmth and kindness for others. The caring things we say and do bring Christ's peace, hope and joy to everyone around us. Prayer Warriors and church congregants are blessed by God's calling to bring us together in prayer and service to him.

This season of celebrating Christ Jesus you may receive a calling from God to join our team of prayer warriors. Please call the church office to answer that call.

May your heart be filled with the wonder of this blessed season. In Christ we give thanks.

Prayer Ministry - Fran

Church Work Day and Fellowship Luncheon Saturday, December 18th, 9:00 am

The church needs your help! Our Spadafora Memorial Prayer Garden is in serious need of attention. We want it to look especially good for the Christmas season. We hope that you will join us on **Saturday morning, 18 December 2021 at 9:00 am** to tidy it up. We will trim bushes, pull weeds, and perform other tasks to make the Prayer Garden beautiful. Tom Burns will provide adult supervision. Please bring your own tools.

We hope to be finished by 11:00 am. Immediately following, we envision having a fellowship luncheon for all who participate. We're currently thinking of hot dogs, chips, beverages, and a dessert. This may not be a traditional holiday feast, but it is a nice reward for something that we can accomplish together to spruce up the garden for Christmas. **Please mark your calendar to remind yourself.**

If you can't work in the garden, we can use people to set up for the luncheon, cook the food, etc. Plus, **we'd really appreciate your company.** Please join us.



A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church

United Methodists all over the globe are liturgical, contemporary, charismatic, social activists, urban, suburban, small town, rural and much more. We are children, youth, young adults, senior adults, new Christians, and mature Christians. We are present on four continents, in more than 45 countries, and we comprise an unknown number of cultures and languages. We are a holy communion of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and perspectives united by the Holy Spirit, driven by the mission of Christ, and bearing the good news of an unmerited grace that changes lives and transforms communities.

Christ's prayer for our unity and command to gather all to the table, to make space for one another, appreciate one another, and look for Christ in each other, prohibit us from creating individual tables only for those who think, act, look, and perceive the world like we do. We cannot be a church that fractures its identity and commitment to Christ by aligning itself with political parties. We cannot be a traditional church or a progressive church or a centrist church. We cannot be a gay or straight church. Our churches must be more than echo chambers made in our own image arguing with each other while neglecting our central purpose. This is the way of the world.

Instead, we must be one people, rooted in scripture, centered in Christ, serving in love and united in the essentials. It is hard work. It is sacred work. It is the ministry of reconciliation that Christ gave to each of us. Our best witness is to love each other as Christ loves us, to show the world the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to bind us together despite our differences. This is living out the gospel.

We are a church:

- Confident in what God has done in Christ Jesus for all humankind
- Committed to personal and social salvation/transformation
- Courageous in dismantling the powers of racism, tribalism, and colonialism

All of our members, clergy, local churches, and annual conferences will continue to have a home in the future United Methodist Church, whether they consider themselves liberal, evangelical, progressive, traditionalist, middle of the road, conservative, centrist, or something else. We hold on to our Wesleyan heritage that "the living core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason".

We are longing for a United Methodist Church that will move towards new forms of being a connec-tional church, a General Conference focused on global essentials, and an empowerment of regions for contextually relevant forms of living our common mission mandate. Deeply rooted in the Doctrinal Stand-ards of the UMC, we pledge to exercise our episcopal role in ways that enable as many United Methodists, lay and clergy, as are willing to remain in the UMC and – together – to continue in making disciples of Je-sus Christ for the transformation of the world. And, because we are part of the Church Universal, we seek to be united visibly and in ministries with other parts of the Body of Christ in God's mission for the human family and creation.

We are committed to strengthening every local church, where the word is preached and Christ is offered, and where the table is set before all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, confident in the

Continued on the next page . . .

A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church, Continued

prayer we have learned to say and share:

- Make us one with Christ—this is faithfulness.
- Make us one with each other—this is unity.
- Make us one in ministry to all the world—this is fruitfulness.

This is the United Methodist Church we love and serve!

Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church
November 4, 2021



Christmas Concert, December 19th, 10:30 am

I'll Be Home for Christmas

"I'll get the family on the phone -- because I'm just one street away from coming home..."

"Hello -- I'm pulling into the driveway now. The house looks beautiful -- all lit up!

YES -- I'll Be Home for Christmas!"

Our Christmas Concert (Cantata) reminds us of physically coming home at Christmas; but also, it reminds us that Jesus left His heavenly home to be born on earth and to have no earthly home of his own (Luke 9:58). All Christians, whether enjoying a home here or living homeless (as Jesus did), look forward to being with Jesus in God's Home, "an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

We invite everyone to come celebrate Jesus' birth on **Sunday, December 19, 2021 at 10:30 am**, where Music and Manger inspire us to say, **I'll Be Home for Christmas!**

Glenda Hess, Director of Music Ministry



Rev. Emily Hotho Appointed Gulf Central District Superintendent, January 1, 2022



Bishop Ken Carter recently announced the appointment of Rev. Emily Hotho as the Superintendent of the Gulf Central District starting January 1, 2022. Rev. Hotho grew up in Jacksonville and attended Southern Methodist University in Dallas, majoring in music performance and religious studies. She also earned a Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School.

Rev. Hotho was commissioned as a Provisional Elder in 2006 and ordained in 2009. She has served at Christ Church UM in Fort Lauderdale, the Center for Clergy Excellence, and most recently at Skycrest United Methodist Church where she has been the pastor since 2013. Rev. Hotho is married to Mat, who is the director of worship technology at Hyde Park UMC, and has three sons ages 3 to 12.

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Rev. Emily Hotho Appointed Gulf Central District Superintendent, Continued

“Rev. Emily Hotho is a very effective pastor and has led the church to become more vital in a complex season. She also has experience on the Florida Conference staff in the area of developing pathways for younger persons to enter full-time Christian service through ordained ministry. Emily will add wisdom and insight to the work of the cabinet and her knowledge of the Gulf Central District will be a blessing,” Bishop Carter said.

Financial Report

As you are aware, when we publish the December newsletter we are reporting the finalized financial data from October. As mentioned in the November 2021 newsletter, we are behind where we would like to be at this time of year. We are 6.92% behind where we anticipated we might be at the end of October. This equates to \$10,561.

Additionally, we are still looking for funds to cover our forthcoming, but unbudgeted, expenses of \$14,965. These unbudgeted expenses include our three primary projects in support of our sanctuary (the balance of funds needed for replacement of our four air conditioning units, an additional 104 chairs, new overhead lighting). We also had a significant unplanned repair to our hydraulic lift to the tune of approximately \$2,000. We are still awaiting information as to whether the air ducts within the sanctuary will require cleaning, which could run up to \$5,000.

We may not see Santa Claus coming down the chimney, but we do hope that you will keep the church in your thoughts and actions as the year comes to an end.

Dwight Kitchens, Finance Chair

Three-year Congregational Giving Profile (CGP) Template: Monthly Version

Data Entry

Current Year

2021

Current Budget

\$321,975

Month	Actual 2018	Actual 2019	Actual 2020	3-Yr Total	3-Yr \$ Avg Monthly	3-Yr \$ Avg Cumulative	Actual 2021
January	\$23,610	\$32,120	\$19,250	\$74,980	\$24,993	\$24,993	\$41,469
February	\$29,950	\$23,134	\$26,344	\$79,428	\$26,476	\$51,469	\$26,663
March	\$29,201	\$34,381	\$31,430	\$95,012	\$31,671	\$83,140	\$23,181
April	\$26,066	\$29,060	\$48,131	\$103,257	\$34,419	\$117,559	\$24,073
May	\$19,712	\$22,029	\$25,816	\$67,557	\$22,519	\$140,078	\$26,093
June	\$20,390	\$27,031	\$25,894	\$73,315	\$24,438	\$164,516	\$15,866
July	\$23,856	\$23,569	\$20,865	\$68,290	\$22,763	\$187,280	\$23,104
August	\$16,727	\$21,790	\$22,494	\$61,011	\$20,337	\$207,617	\$20,887
September	\$24,401	\$22,385	\$25,185	\$71,971	\$23,990	\$231,607	\$21,208
October	\$24,825	\$22,385	\$20,998	\$68,208	\$22,736	\$254,343	\$20,238
November	\$22,133	\$28,024	\$25,284	\$75,441	\$25,147	\$279,490	\$0
December	\$24,397	\$52,968	\$26,088	\$103,453	\$34,484	\$313,974	\$0
Total	\$285,268	\$338,876	\$317,779	\$941,923	\$313,974	\$313,974	\$242,782

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Financial Report, Continued

Monthly Budget Monitoring Based on CGP Goals

Current Year **2021**
 Current Budget **\$321,975**

Month	% Needed Monthly	\$ Needed Monthly	Received Monthly	% Needed Cumulative	\$ Needed Cumulative	Received Cumulative	Status Ahead or (Behind)	% Ahead or (Behind)
January	7.96%	\$25,630	\$41,469	7.96%	\$25,630	\$41,469	\$15,839	61.80%
February	8.43%	\$27,151	\$26,663	16.39%	\$52,781	\$68,132	\$15,351	29.08%
March	10.09%	\$32,478	\$23,181	26.48%	\$85,259	\$91,313	\$6,054	7.10%
April	10.96%	\$35,296	\$24,073	37.44%	\$120,555	\$115,386	(\$5,169)	-4.29%
May	7.17%	\$23,093	\$26,093	44.61%	\$143,647	\$141,479	(\$2,168)	-1.51%
June	7.78%	\$25,061	\$15,866	52.40%	\$168,709	\$157,345	(\$11,364)	-6.74%
July	7.25%	\$23,343	\$23,104	59.65%	\$192,052	\$180,449	(\$11,603)	-6.04%
August	6.48%	\$20,855	\$20,887	66.13%	\$212,907	\$201,336	(\$11,571)	-5.43%
September	7.64%	\$24,602	\$21,208	73.77%	\$237,509	\$222,544	(\$14,965)	-6.30%
October	7.24%	\$23,315	\$20,238	81.01%	\$260,824	\$242,782	(\$18,042)	-6.92%
November	8.01%	\$25,788	\$0	89.02%	\$286,612	\$242,782	(\$43,830)	
December	10.98%	\$35,363	\$0	100.00%	\$321,975	\$242,782	(\$79,193)	

Totals **\$321,975**

A Little Bit of Heaven's Wish List

ALBOH has created an **Amazon Wish List** for those who want to donate to the school. All you have to do is scan the QR code below and the Wishlist pops up. The items will be shipped directly to the school. We appreciate all donations that are brought to the pre-school throughout the year. We often get asked by many parents about items that we may need. We have created an “**Amazon Wish List**” to keep you informed on what we need, not just at Christmas; many of these are the items that we go through daily. The “Wish List” can be shared with family, friends, and other companies that may wish to donate. Please note, you are not obligated to purchase any of these items. A receipt for tax purposes can be given upon request.



Latisha Cook, Director



Would you like to donate supplies to A Little Bit of Heaven?

We've made it very easy, Just choose items off our Amazon wish list.

Pay for the items and they are automatically shipped to us!



Food Pantry Supplies Are Low

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving we gave out 20 bags of groceries! You can help the food pantry by donating money or groceries.

We always need **spaghetti sauce (plastic bottles preferred), pasta (spaghetti and Tuna or Hamburger Helper boxes -- non-brand name OK), rice and beans, all kinds of canned veggies, canned fruits, peanut butter and jelly, canned meats (tuna, chicken, Spam or similar), cans of soup.**

Thank you,
Ann Johnson

United Methodist Men (UMM)

We hope Lake Gibson men will attend our next meeting, **Saturday, December 18th at 9:00 am in the Family Life Center.** This date was chosen to allow men to help with the Memorial Garden beautification scheduled that day.

Michael Moake agreed to continue to serve as president in 2022.

Michael Moake, President
863-816-3194

United Methodist Women (UMW)

The UMW began in-person circle meetings on Wednesday, November 3rd. This was a joint circle meeting (Ruth Circle of Love and Heart to Heart Circle together). We also used this opportunity to hold a mini-Unit meeting with reports from the secretary and treasurer and discussion of upcoming events and activities.

Cindy Webb's photos are shown in this article. We were excited by the turn-out! It was great to escape "pandemic house arrest" and enjoy catching up with our UMW family.

The next joint circle meeting will be **Wednesday, December 1st at 10:30 am**, to be followed by our Christmas "finger food" feast.

Continued . . .

United Methodist Women (UMW), Continued

On December 1st we will discuss chapter 4, Stand Up, Take Up and Walk, of *You Are Never Alone* by Max Lucado. Because not everyone has a copy of the book, we will provide handouts to assist the discussion.

Read Matt 9:35 - 36 and John 5:1 - 6 to prepare to discuss chapter 4's Questions for Reflection (page 163 - 166 of the text).

Contact Information

Pastor Steve Polk, 863-858-5431; fax 863-853-1625; pastor@lakegibsonumc.com

Kristie Otte, Administrative Secretary, 863-858-5431, office@lakegibsonumc.com

Office Hours: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday thru Thursday

Sue Heshman, Bookkeeper

Glenda Grant Hess, Music Director

Leon Rumohr, Custodian

Latisha Cook, Director of A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center, 863-858-8400.

Kristie Otte, Lexie Otte, Dave McPherson, Bob Siegel and Justin Oliva, Audio/Visual Team

November 3rd Joint Circle Meeting



Continued on the next page . . .

**Photos of the Joint Circle Meeting, November 3rd
By Cindy Webb**



Merry Matters (Making Many Mats)

The Merry Matters had a fabulous turnout for their workshops on November 10th and 24th. Our “anonymous photographer” took lots of pictures on the 24th, which was a 3-way work fest. In addition to preparing strips of plastic yarn (plarn) to be crocheted into ground mats for the homeless, we had ladies making Christmas cards to place on dinner trays of people in nursing homes, and wrapping gifts for the **Senior Orphans of Polk County**.

At the November UMW mini-Unit meeting, Lynn Meske was asked to obtain information on how we might help Senior Orphans. This resulted in us getting wish lists for people who are served by this organization (they have very low monthly income and no relatives in this area to help them). Each person submitted 3 wishes for Christmas. Some were as humble as a new broom, a baseball cap, or an adult coloring book.

We started out with a list of 10 names which were claimed in a matter of minutes. Because of the strong interest in helping out, Lynn got a second list with 15 names. At the gift wrapping session, Lynn reported that we had filled Christmas wishes for 22 of the 25 people!

The card-making project used old Christmas cards to create stand-up cards for food trays. We will determine which nursing homes have very low-income or seldom visited residents, and give the tray cards to them.

We agreed that the Merry Matters workshops, which are held the **2nd and 4th Wednesdays** of each month, can be used for other crafts at the same time. Please let Lynn (863-858-3589) know if you have an idea for a project which will show our love to needy people.



Merry Matters (Making Many Mats), Continued

Gift Wrapping for Senior Orphans

Photos by Lynn Meske Anonymous



You'll never guess what this is.



Almost finished, at last!



Generous donations; hours of wrapping.



Packages stuffed everywhere in Lynn's car. This is our 3rd delivery to Senior Orphans!

**Pastor Appreciation Day
October 31, 2021**

Photos by Cindy Webb



You are invited to our Annual Christmas Extravaganza!

Friday, December 10, 2021, from 5:00 - 7:00 pm at the

**Neighborhood House of Ministry
8621 Oakwood Drive Lakeland, FL 33810**

**Gift Basket Drawings | Hot Chocolate
Holiday Treats | Hot Cider**

Support the ministry while shopping for Christmas decorations, crafts, and treats.

First UMC Memory Care Ministry Invites You to the Third in Series of Zoom Workshops

If you have a family member dealing with dementia, check out this **free Zoom workshop**. They are facilitated by Vicky Pitner, CDP, Coordinator of the First United Methodist Church Connections Ministry and Certified Dementia Practitioner. This is a live training session so questions will be addressed. Contact Vicky (vpitner@fumc.org) for Zoom information.

Friday, December 10, 10:00 am
Positive Connections: Conversations without Conflict

When caregiving for an individual with dementia, conversation can turn into an argument very quickly. The brain's ability to process and respond to information declines with a diagnosis such as dementia or Alzheimer's. Learn how to 'tweak' your speech and enjoy more pleasant and meaningful interactions when communicating with an individual living with cognitive decline.



BIKE



HOPE



LOVE

Bike Hope Love Tour Visits in February

The Bike Hope Love cycling group is coming in February. We need volunteers to help prepare dinner for 20 bicyclists upon arrival and breakfast in the morning before they depart. They should arrive between 4:00 and 5:00 pm on February 2nd and depart by 9:00 am on the 3rd. They will use the FLC for showers, eating, sleeping, and devotions.

We are asking the United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women to consider preparing the dinner and breakfast, but others are **very** welcome to help. If you would like to volunteer to help set up, cook or clean up, please let Phyllis Kitchens know (863-984-4564/410-790-2662 or email phyllis_kitchens@hotmail.com).

This year's Florida tour is to **raise funds to provide housing for female students at Africa University in Zimbabwe**. Currently many women must walk from distant villages in dangerous conditions to get an education.

We have an opportunity to assist in the education of female students at Africa University, a Pan-African United Methodist institution. Increasing enrollment at AU and a lack of on-campus housing means that some students commute from remote areas and find affordable, but unsafe, off-campus housing, putting them at high risk for living in and being subjected to untenable situations.

My vision is for East Ohio to build an on-campus women's dorm that will provide a safe, secure environment and a community of support, so that female AU students will be able to focus on education without risking their very lives." [Source: bikehopelove.org]

Who Are They?

[Source: bikehopelove.org]

"Bike Hope Love began in 1987 as a small group of Methodist cyclists called **Pedaling Parsons** that shared a passion for cycling, community and helping their vulnerable neighbors.

"They had the idea that instead of just riding for fun and fitness, they could ride with a purpose. The vision of that founding group resulted in a decades-long movement that has pedaled over 18,000 miles and has raised over \$900,000 for mission projects in the United States and around the world.

Continued on the next page . . .

Bike Hope Love Tour, Continued

Today these former “Pedaling Parsons” aren’t just clergy, but are made up of both pastors and lay-people. Some ride bikes and others are part of the support team that keeps the riders on the road, gets them to their destinations, refreshes and feeds them on the tour and helps them when they break down, get lost, or get hurt.

Bike Hope Love riders are husband and wife, father and son, father and daughter, mother and son teams; they are retirees; they are youth; and they range in age from 9 to 83. This community of cyclists don't mind riding in the rain or sleeping on church floors. They love God, meeting new friends, and the adventure for the sake of serving God and others."

CROP Hunger Walk 2022 Kickoff Video Conference on Zoom December 7th, 8:00 pm

Lakeland's CROP HUNGER WALK will be held in-person on **Sunday, February 22nd at 1:00 pm**. Start location is First Presbyterian Church, 175 Lake Hollingsworth Dr, Lakeland, FL 33801. This is a fund-raising event for Church World Service (CWS) and also a collection of nonperishable food for local organizations that feed the hungry. Virtual walks are also welcome.

If anyone is interested in being **Lake Gibson UMC's CROP Walk representative**, please let Phyllis Kitchens know (863-984-4564 or 410-790-2662). Anyone can join in the Celebration video conference described below to learn more about the good that CROP Walk does:

Join us as we celebrate another year of CROP Hunger Walks! We will hear from CEO Rick Santos, learn about the work of Church World Service (CWS) around the world and cheer on our Walkers and volunteers!

*Please register no later than **Friday, December 3rd**. We will send you a Zoom link to the celebration. Everyone is welcome to attend!*

[REGISTER HERE](#)

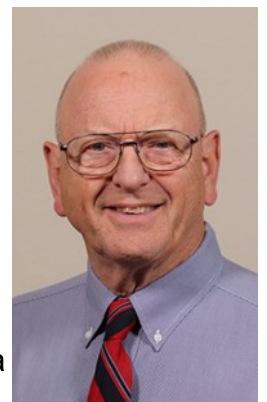
If this link doesn't work, copy and paste the address below into your browser to register for the video conference:

https://act.cwsglobal.org/acton/ct/42325/s-0350-2111/Bct/l-1aab/l-1aab:2255/ct1_0/1/lu?sid=TV%3A0qmQG6mis

New Hymn Honoring Soldiers

“**Ever Faithful to the Call**” is a new hymn that honors the service of our soldiers as they do whatever is necessary to keep us free. This easy-to-sing hymn was inspired by ideas and suggestions from many sources, such as chaplains, veterans, military wives, church music professionals, military professional associations, and others. The verses reflect the Army core values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

The hymn is provided free of cost for nonprofit and noncommercial use, such as in worship services or public ceremonies. Composer **Tom Lough** is a ten-year US Army combat engineer veteran with service in Korea, Vietnam, and Germany. He is also a church music composer.



UMW World Thank Offering -- A Year-long Spiritual Practice

“November traditionally is United Methodist Women's [World Thank Offering](#) time! I love this time of year! It's a harvest of blessings! When I pour all the coins and dollar bills that I've collected over the year into one big pile on my kitchen table, I just glory in all the blessings those coins represent. It is always a thrill!

“I try to make **giving to the World Thank Offering a year-long spiritual practice of gratitude and thanksgiving**. When I'm especially thankful for something, I find a coin or dollar bill and put it in my Thank Bank which sits on my kitchen windowsill and then I say a prayer of gratitude. When I find a coin on the ground or when emptying the washing machine, **I think of something I'm thankful for, say a prayer, and put the coin in my Thank Bank**. My old washing machine sure helps me increase my gratitude!

“With the increased use of debit cards, we don't seem to have as many coins as we've had in the past. So, **this coming year I'm going to put little slips of paper next to my Thank Bank. Then when I think of something I'm thankful for I can just write an “I owe you” and short note about what I'm thankful for**. That way at Thank Bank Harvest time [November] next year, I'll be able to not only pay out the “I owe you(s)”, but I'll be reminded of all the things I was thankful for throughout the year. What a blessing that will be! It is in giving that we receive!

“The World Thank Offering is an important way we increase our **Mission Giving**, but it's also an opportunity to grow spiritually as we practice living in true gratitude. Please give to the World Thank Offering in whatever way works to you and join me in the blessing!

“With Gratitude,

“Cynthia Rives
United Methodist Women
National Board Vice President”

[Source: Email from Cynthia Rives, UMW VP, November 23, 2021]

Commentary: The Toxic Evangelical Variant

By Martin Thielen

Posted on *The Doubter's Parish Newsletter*, www.DoubtersParish.com,
November 1, 2021 [Used with permission]

It's not an exaggeration to say that the evangelical church saved me in every way a person can be saved. They introduced me to Jesus. They became the family my childhood family could not be. They loved and affirmed me. They educated me. They gave me a vocation. And they gave me exceptional opportunities of service. Although I left the evangelical church years ago for a more progressive expression of faith, I've always appreciated the gifts they gave me.

However, these days, I barely recognize the evangelical church in America. Like the COVID Delta variant, some (not all) branches of evangelicalism have mutated into to a highly toxic force, doing great damage to the Christian faith, the American church, and the common good of humanity. Although this is not true of all evangelicals, a significant segment of the evangelical world exhibits severe symptoms of destructive, life-diminishing religion. Given that troubling reality, it's past time to challenge this toxic evangelical variant.

Characteristics of the Toxic Evangelical Variant

The toxic evangelical variant breeds perpetual anger. It remains constantly enraged over hot-button issues like abortion, gay rights, transgender bathroom battles, critical race theory, vaccine

Continued on the next page . . .

The Toxic Evangelical Variant, Continued

mandates, and whatever the outrage of the week is on its favorite cable television networks and talk-radio shows.

The toxic evangelical variant denies the realities of science. It constantly rejects proven scientific facts including evolution, human-made climate change, and the safety and effectiveness of COVID vaccines. It often shares anti-science conspiracy theories from its pulpits and social media posts, making the world a more dangerous place.

The toxic evangelical variant oppresses women. In the name of God and the Holy Bible, it promotes second-class citizenship for women. For example, it tells women to “graciously submit” to their husbands and insists that women cannot serve as ministers, even if they are gifted and called.

The toxic evangelical variant hurts the LGBTQ community. It tells gay people they are an abomination to God. It places them in conversion therapy programs, causing deep emotional and spiritual damage. And it constantly fights against gay rights. All of which produce hateful prejudice and cruelty toward LGBTQ persons.

The toxic evangelical variant engages in hyper-partisanship. A recent survey asked people what came to mind when they heard the word *evangelical*. The vast majority said, “political,” “partisan,” or “Republican.” We see that reality in its overwhelming and unyielding support of Donald Trump, who violates every value evangelicals claim to hold including character, decency, marital fidelity, truth telling, and family values.

The toxic evangelical variant practices gross hypocrisy. It claims to be pro-life but supports the death penalty, gives its blessing to almost every war, and fights against gun safety. It claims to follow Jesus the compassionate healer, but tries to take away health care for millions. It preaches love but promotes anger, division, and bitterness. And tragically, throughout its history and even today, it often nurtures racism.

The toxic evangelical variant damages the reputation of Christ and church. When people look at the overwhelmingly negative attributes of toxic evangelicalism, large numbers of them think, *If this is Christianity, I want no part of it.* Millions of people, especially young adults, have left faith and church because of this poisonous strand of religion. Although the toxic evangelical movement claims that “saving souls” is its top priority, it turns more people away from Jesus than toward him.

The toxic evangelical variant jettisons Jesus. In dozens of ways, the toxic variant of evangelical Christianity violates the life, example, spirit, and teachings of Jesus, including his call to love, kindness, inclusion, grace, mercy, compassion, and justice. Although it likes to ask the question, “What would Jesus do?” it chooses to do the exact opposite. This untethering from Jesus, more than anything else, is the most tragic characteristic of today’s toxic evangelical variant.

Sadly (and I take no joy in writing this critique), many other examples of toxic evangelicalism could be given, including self-righteous judgmentalism, a spirit of anti-intellectualism, unbiblical anti-immigrant views, constant violation of the separation of church and state, and dangerous nationalism, equating love of God with love of America. As a former evangelical, I find all of this extremely heartbreaking.

How to Respond to the Toxic Evangelical Variant

Run like crazy. I once heard a story about a woman taking a walk in her neighborhood. She saw a little boy trying to ring a doorbell he couldn’t quite reach. Although he stretched with all his might, he could not push the doorbell. Being a kind woman, she walked over and picked him up so he could reach

Continued on the next page . . .

The Toxic Evangelical Variant, Continued

it. He rang the doorbell over and over and over again. "What now?" asked the woman. The little boy answered, "Run like crazy!"

If you are connected to a church or organization that promotes toxic evangelicalism, my advice to you is, "Run like crazy." Staying will poison your spirit. For years, I attempted to be a moderating force in a fundamentalist denomination. But I utterly failed. The sad truth is, churches committed to religious-right fundamentalism will never change. I realize that some people—because of family, friendship, community, or employment reasons—cannot easily depart their faith community, even if it is toxic. However, if at all possible, you need to get out. Now.

Adopt life-giving faith. People who leave toxic religion can find healthy faith options in many other places. For me, that means progressive Christianity in a mainline denomination. But that's certainly not the only viable choice. Many conservative and moderate faith traditions avoid the pitfalls of toxic evangelicalism. Other, nontraditional expressions of faith also exist. And people who don't affirm any religious beliefs can still embrace life-enhancing spiritual values like love, mercy, honesty, reason, authenticity, generosity, tolerance, kindness, service, education, inclusion, justice, and the common good. These traits, even without an overtly religious component, are far healthier (and more like Jesus) than the toxic evangelical variant.

Challenge the toxicity. Toxic evangelicalism needs to be challenged, even when doing so is difficult. For example, when millions of people in the evangelical church conflated loving Jesus with loving Donald Trump, I (along with many others) publicly challenged that belief. I tried to do so respectfully but also firmly. It wasn't a popular position in my bright red, religious-right community, and I paid a price for my minority stance. However, that dangerous coupling of hyper-partisanship and evangelical religion needed to be vigorously challenged. From quiet conversations to public forums, toxic religion must always be countered.

Offer a better alternative. In the end, the best answer to bad religion is *good religion*. Jesus understood that. In the face of the arrogant, judgmental, and legalistic religion of his day, Jesus offered a healthy alternative of humility, grace, mercy, compassion, and justice. He calls us to do the same.

Individual Christians and faith communities can offer a better alternative to the world than the toxic evangelical variant. Although we'll never be perfect, we can promote a religion of grace, not judgment. A religion of love, not hatred. A religion of open-mindedness, not intolerance. A religion of compassion, not legalism. A religion of humility, not arrogance.

Years ago, before I retired from pastoral ministry, a young family visited my mainline United Methodist congregation. After attending for several months, they scheduled an appointment with me to discuss baptism and membership. I asked them, "*What attracted you to our congregation?*" They said, "*The sign.*" I said, "*What sign?*" They said, "*The sign out front that says, 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors.'* We thought all churches were narrow-minded and judgmental. So, when we saw your sign, we decided to visit. When we discovered that the church inside lived up to the sign outside, we wanted to become members."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: To share this post, please click the appropriate icon at the bottom of the page. If you would like to communicate with me, feel free to [send an email](#) and I'll respond as soon as possible. To receive my [monthly newsletter](#) (a brief email notification alerting you to new posts and other materials), please do so today. Thank you for your interest in Doubter's Parish. Writing for you is a joy.

"Lord I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)

Climate & Community: A Faithful Action for Climate Justice

The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society presents a winter webinar series, December 6 - 9.

[Press release by Aimee Hong, November 10, 2021]

[Source: <https://www.umcjustice.org/articles/climate-community-a-faithful-action-for-climate-justice>. Reported in UM News Daily Digest, November 23, 2021]



As we continue to call for bold leadership and advocate for policies rooted in justice and sustainability, we understand that God is calling each of us to respond and that as a denomination we cannot hope to transform the world until we change our way of being in it. (2016 Book of Resolutions, #1035, “Climate Change and the Church’s Response”)

As people of faith, we have a special calling to honor all of creation and establish justice.

The General Board of Church and Society invites you to participate in the winter webinar series, “Climate & Community: A Faithful Action for Climate Justice,” where we will hear from experts and assemble toolkits to help us take the next steps post-COP26 [the U.N. Climate Change Conference].

REGISTER NOW! To register for the complete series, or just for an individual webinar, click on the title of the seminar. If the link doesn’t work, type the full address below the title into your browser.

December 6, 2021, 2 PM (ET) [Climate Justice as a Global Movement](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IrgrW01QQBOepvHcm48ThQ

December 7, 2021, 2 PM (ET) [Theological Reflection on Climate Justice](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_U8m4iuvLSx-zbR9cuXNtKw

December 8, 2021, 10 AM (ET) [Climate Change and Front-Line Communities](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gx2UDnGCTPy-2RL46n7POg

December 8, 2021, 2 PM (ET) [Indigenous Climate and Water Justice](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5PAZCJ-2R7-dbFu6AxNFuA

December 9, 2021, 10 AM (ET) [En-Roads Climate Workshop – Simulating Global Solutions](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d1d1NhOoTLul-PPbXy342w

(Note: The above is an interactive workshop. Please come prepared to engage with the facilitator and fellow participants. This workshop will not be recorded.)

December 9, 2021, 2 PM (ET) [Envisioning a Just Green Transition – Panel Discussion](#)
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_vUKcpUDzSAawRHMpgvmKIA

December 9 - 11, 2021 [“This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate”](#)
[<https://www.umcjustice.org/articles/preview/a036ce8e-bb1a-456c-866f-058f006efdfd#!>]

As part of “Climate & Community: A Faithful Action for Climate Justice,” we invite you to gather with your family, friends, and fellow church members and **watch a screening of “This Changes Everything,”** a documentary film based on Naomi Klein’s book. The documentary is available for three days (December 9 - 11, 2021). The links to this media including feature film, film preview, chapters, and any related content included should be considered **private and confidential**. They may not be uploaded to any website, Facebook page, or similar digital outlet, including your own. They should not be shared or sent out to the public in any way. The shared video cannot be edited or manipulated in any way. This transmission is sent in trust, for the sole purpose of delivery to the intended recipient.

You're Standing at the Pearly Gates, But What about Those Still on Earth?

Recently, during Sue Heishman's Sunday School class, a discussion ensued regarding how we might help our families and relatives prior to our passing. From planning a funeral service, writing an obituary, knowing enough details to write a meaningful eulogy, finding details permitting others to open and close electronic accounts, and myriad other details, we **can** plan ahead.

There are many resources online to help us organize our thoughts. Two which you may find useful are listed below:

[legacyorganizer.pdf](https://www.kluth.org/legacyorganizer.pdf)

[You can type into your browser <https://www.kluth.org/legacyorganizer.pdf> to open this file.]

[familyorganizer.pdf](https://www.kluth.org/familyorganizer.pdf)

[You can also type into your browser <https://www.kluth.org/familyorganizer.pdf> to open this file.]
The .pdf copies can be printed as well as previewed online.

[The Christian Legacy Organizer](#) is available in a digital Microsoft Word version which you can easily edit and modify for your own needs. Cost for this product is \$19.95 (digital version which will be emailed to you) or \$29.95 for a paper version (mailed to you).

We may not know when we will join our Lord, but we can plan now to make it easier for those temporarily left behind. Take a few minutes to preview the above information to see if they might assist you and your family. Better to do this now with your full faculties, rather than put it off until "later", which may be too late.

Dwight Kitchens

Extracts from a Missionary Report from Zambia

Barbara Allen-Coil received this message from a friend of hers who was recently in the US before returning to the orphanage and school that she and her husband run in Zambia. On November 18, 2021, Connie Jeremias wrote:

“The renovation of the Sunday School classroom is happening! A big thank you to those who are helping to do this. Even though I am in America for the moment, I have eager friends who are just as excited about things as I am in completing this project. Before we flew back, the room was plastered, primed and painted. We then got our white board and some maps mounted. We are in the process of finding tables and chairs enough for 65 children. This excites me to see these children learning the Word of God each week. And of course, we can't get away without playing a little soccer (football) before we go home. Thank you again for giving.



“If you ever have a chance to join us in Zambia, you might meet this group of ladies. As I visit their homes, I see their dedication and desire to grow in the Lord. They may not have much in life, but they are willing to share what they have. I also have the joy of sharing with them. From plastic containers to scraps of material, they are quite resourceful.

Continued on the next page . . .

Extracts from a Missionary Report from Zambia, Continued

Several of you have helped us supply "Socks for Students." We have been able to help not only the orphanage children, but also approximately 50 other children. So many things in life I have taken for granted. For many of these children, it is more than a 2-hour walk just to purchase a pair of socks. I am truly thankful for these little things in life.

Connie Jeremias, <newhopezambia@gmail.com>

Thank you for my socks!



When the Clock Falls Back: The Effects on Persons Living with Memory Loss

By Vicky Pitner, First UMC Lakeland, Memory Ministry

For most of us in the United States, we "fell back on Sunday, November 7th, as daylight savings time came to an end. This means that the already waning days of autumn become an hour shorter. Arizona and Hawaii do not participate in this annual time change, and several other states -- California, Washington, and Oregon -- are in the process of passing legislation to stay on permanent daylight savings time.

Research shows that our body's circadian rhythms and daily sense of routine respond to natural light. While much of our day is spent indoors in artificial light, we are still affected by our outdoor world. Often people report feeling "out of whack" at the end of daylight savings time as it can exacerbate depression and sleep disorders.

For people living with memory loss, this transition can be even more apparent. Approximately 20% of people with dementia experience more confusion at the end of the day and into the night, often referred as sundown syndrome. Increased anxiety, aggression, pacing or wandering can also be a symptom of late-evening confusion.

It's theorized that people associate the sun going down with returning home. People with memory loss might be tolerant of staying in a place that feels unfamiliar during the day, but they understandably may become a lot more perturbed at the idea of spending the night. Many people with dementia recall going home from work at dusk or being at home to cook dinner and take care of their children. It's extremely stressful to feel "trapped" and unable to fulfill these responsibilities. The shadows of dusk can cause visual disruption for people with Alzheimer's disease, and feeling tired at the end of the day makes everything a little bit harder for people with and without memory loss.

Below are some tips to take for extra preparation for the darker afternoons and evenings on and after November 7:

- Take walks or sit outside during daylight as much as possible.
- Close the blinds in the late afternoon and turn on inside lights.
- Take it easy in the early evenings and use calming sensory activities such as using aromatherapy.

[Used with permission of the author, Vicky Pitner, Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP). If you would like more information on our Memory Ministry or need tips for supporting persons living with memory loss, please contact Vicky at vpitner@firstumc.org.]

Come to Bethlehem

View the **Come to Bethlehem** display from **December 4th to 27th, 6:00 to 10:00 pm at Country Oaks** subdivision off of Old Polk City Road, near Crestview Baptist Church.



DOING THE MOST GOOD®

The Salvation Army's Response to False Claims on the Topic of Racism

Nov 25, 2021

The holidays are a welcome reminder of the things we are grateful for—and for the power of service on behalf of those who are less fortunate. The Salvation Army mission statement clearly outlines the nature of our service: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in His name without discrimination. The beliefs that motivate our service are based solely on the Bible, and that will never change.

But although we remain committed to serving everyone in need—regardless of their beliefs, backgrounds, or lifestyle—some individuals and groups have recently attempted to mislabel our organization to serve their own agendas. They have claimed that we believe our donors should apologize for their skin color, that The Salvation Army believes America is an inherently racist society, and that we have abandoned our Christian faith for one ideology or another.

Those claims are simply false, and they distort the very goal of our work.

The truth is that The Salvation Army believes that racism is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity, and that we are called by God to work toward a world where all people are loved, accepted, and valued. Our positional statement on racism makes this clear. These beliefs and goals are critically important because we know that racism exists, and we are determined to do everything the Bible asks of us to overcome it.

The Salvation Army occasionally publishes internal study guides on various complex topics to help foster positive conversations and grace-filled reflection among Salvationists. By openly discussing these issues, we always hope to encourage the development of a more thoughtful organization that is better positioned to support those in need. But no one is being told how to think. Period.

In this case, the guide “Let’s Talk About Racism,” was issued as a voluntary resource, but it has since become a focus of controversy. We have done our best to provide accurate information, but unfortunately, some have chosen to ignore those efforts. At the same time, International Headquarters realized that certain aspects of the guide may need to be clarified.

Consequently, for both reasons, the International Social Justice Commission has now withdrawn the guide for appropriate review.

We at The Salvation Army remain undeterred in our mission because we are confident in the power of the gospel, and because millions of vulnerable Americans need our help. And we remain deeply grateful for the support of a generous public—people from all walks of life and from all parts of the country—who help us meet human need wherever it exists. Our supporters know that ours is a message of love, even for those who disagree or attack us. That is the model set by Christ, and we strive to follow it every day.

May God bless you, and Merry Christmas.

[Source: <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/story/the-salvation-armys-response-to-false-claims-on-the-topic-of-racism/>]

ITEMS NEEDED AT HOPE HOUSE

PANTRY AND/OR TO-GO BAG FOOD

Single-serving canned pasta, ready-to-eat soup, Vienna sausage, beanie weenies, tuna or chicken salad kits, fruit cups, peanut butter or cheese crackers, Saltine crackers, chips, and individually wrapped snacks.

NON – FOOD ITEMS

Disposable razors, baby wipes, triple antibiotic cream, deodorant, hydrocortisone cream; over-the-counter (OTC) medicine, such as ibuprofen and antacids. (These can be found at the Dollar Tree or the dollar aisle at most stores.) Suntan lotion (sun screen) and bug repellent are also needed.

CLOTHES

****HH desperately needs men's outerwear shorts, sizes 30 to 34.**** Men's underwear, boxer or briefs are especially welcome. Socks, especially dark, low-cut ones. Men's and women's t-shirts, mainly men's size large. Tennis shoes, especially men's sizes 9 1/2 to 11 1/2.

MISCELLANEOUS

Backpacks, small duffel bags, batteries, small flashlights.

Thank you for anything you can donate. ♥

Hope House Happenings (Excerpts from HH Volunteer Reports)

Tuesday, November 2, 2021 - Rick McLellan

Our guests were served a meal from Chef Dick McPherson, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, who dished up the food and ministered to our guests with Rick McLellan. Debbie McLellan was home sick today, suffering from chemotherapy side effects. Our guests raved about Dick's fabulous Creole butter pork loin dinner, with potato salad and broccoli.

We were busy and gave out toiletry kits, razors, deodorant, camping toilet paper, radio and lantern batteries, masks and Band-Aids. Clothing items and socks were available for our guests. We filled guests' requests for 2 pocket New Testaments, 2 Gospel of John booklets, and a *Daily Bread*.

Rob and Sue Atchley, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, stopped by. Rob and Sue brought us needed items that we use to fill our brown bags. Harry Card, a veteran and former Hope Center volunteer, came by with coffee, creamer, and laundry detergent. Thanks, Harry, for all you do. Several other people brought by bags of clothing.

Wednesday, November 3, 2021 - Laura Webb and Geri Mayo

Laura worked extremely hard! She not only signed in our guests, she worked through 20 bags of clothing donations! HH had so many donations today! We are so very grateful! A wonderful gentleman, Harry Card, donated bottles of laundry detergent, large cans of coffee and creamers. Our good friend, Jim, from Christ the King Episcopal Church, dropped off food donations which included two loaves of bread for sandwiches.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

Wednesday, November 3, 2021 - Laura Webb and Geri Mayo, Continued

Joy Miller from North Lakeland Homeless Outreach donated several boxes of food, toiletries, new socks and underwear, and individual packets of laundry detergent and fabric softener. We are so blessed by her generosity! A good friend of Laura's, Edna, donated a bicycle! Our guest was so happy! Also, she has been gathering tents from her friends and neighbors. She and her husband will be putting them up in their yard this weekend to make sure that they're undamaged. They will bring them next Wednesday.



Paulette from PRA, International texted at the end of the day. The Dream Center had extra boxes of whole, uncooked, frozen chickens. Laura and Geri picked up three 60-lb boxes for HH. PTL!

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 - Rick and Debbie McLellan

Our guests were served a meal by Chef Dick McPherson, who really came across our hero on short notice that Debbie was not going to be able to cook. Dick dished up the food and ministered to our guests with Rick McLellan. Our guests enjoyed Dick's much-loved homemade spaghetti with a fresh garden salad.

We had a visit from Jim Aldrich, who brought us food, clothing, and other items from our friends at Christ the King Episcopal Church. Polk City Baptist Church provided some of the canned goods and other items given to our guests today. A lady stopped by with an armful of 2-man tents and gave them out at our tables in the yard. We also filled a request for a large print Bible and some devotional books provided by Lake Gibson United Methodist Church.

God provided a great day with a congenial atmosphere and we received many expressions of gratitude from our guests. They were so thankful for the generosity and prayers of donors and friends of the Hope Center!

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 - Debbie and Rick McLellan

We are still following COVID-19 restrictions; we set up tables outdoors for lunch and jointly maintained social distancing. It was a cold day with our guests in the front yard and the patio area. We require everyone who goes inside the House to wear a mask, with only 2 allowed inside at a time. By the end of the day, we had served 14 guests. Rick McLellan led in prayer and a devotion from Luke 16, The Rich Man and Lazarus.

Our guests were served a meal by Chef Dick McPherson, who again was our hero, coming in to cook on short notice since Debbie was not able to cook. Dick dished up the food and ministered to our guests with Rick McLellan. Our guests enjoyed Dick's much-loved homemade Brunswick stew with a fresh garden salad and fresh-baked cornbread.

Our brown to-go bags included a jumbo hot dog on a bun, a bag of chips, a pack of Lance crackers, a pudding cup, a Rice Krispies Treat, a diced peaches fruit cup and a bag of M&Ms. To quench thirst was ice-cold bottled water with a flavor packet and bottled juice drinks. Each guest also received a pop-top can (choice of Chef Boy-R-Dee spaghetti or similar item), which they took to their tents for supper. We also fed the Hope House kitties.

We gave out toiletry kits razors, deodorant, flashlight, lantern and radio batteries, masks, socks, blankets, and winter clothing items.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 - Debbie and Rick McLellan, Continued

We brought sanitized towels and wash cloths for showers, and gave each guest a towel, washcloth and hygiene kit. Nine guests requested showers; three guests used the laundry.

We had a visit from Jim Aldrich, who brought us food, clothing, and other items from our friends at Christ the King Episcopal Church. Polk City Baptist Church provided some of the canned goods and other items given to our guests today. We received a donation of some useful items from Charlie and Linda Alvarez, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. We also received a donation from the terrific employees of Lakeland Electric. Pocket New Testaments issued were provided by Lake Gibson United Methodist Church.

In spite of a cold wind, God provided a great day, terrific meal and many Blessings for our guests.

Wednesday, November 24, 2021 - Laura Webb, Chris Hernbrott, Lesley Kristine and Jason Real, and Geri Mayo

HAPPY THANKSGIVING EVE FROM HOPE HOUSE! A total of 13 guests signed in, with 5 using the shower and 4 using the laundry. Laura kept up with the shower list and made sure everyone had all the toiletries and clothes they needed. Christopher set up the breakfast table and set all of the chairs and tables outside. Lesley and Jason processed the clothes donations. Paulette with PRA, International sent her team with boxes of food donations.

Thanks to two special ladies, Ann and Carm, our guests enjoyed mini sausage biscuits and bacon, egg and cheese burritos for breakfast. Cereal and pastries were also served. Coffee, cocoa with marshmallows, juice and bottled water were the beverage choices. Thank you, Candy from the Salvation Army, Winter Haven, for the new coffee urns/pitchers. Our HH kitties enjoyed their alfresco breakfast.

Hope House would like to thank Ed Kirkland and the folks at Harvest Meat Market for cooking and slicing the turkeys. Thanks to Daniel Webb for picking them up and bringing them to HH. Daniel also had food donations from his work, which included two more turkeys. (Those will be for Christmas). Our delicious Thanksgiving Eve lunch consisted of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, sweet potato casserole, cranberry sauce, Hawaiian rolls and green bean casserole made by Ms. Cindy. Lesley made deviled eggs and brought bottles of soda. Joy Miller from North Lakeland Homeless Outreach and her daughter brought pumpkin pies and Reddi Wip. Chris donated a pecan pie.

Every guest received a bag filled with all sorts of goodies. They also had a choice of a canned item and a snack from our pantry. They also received the donated bag which contained a small lap blanket, snacks, toothpaste, soap and a bottled water.

We are so very grateful for the beautiful weather today.
We are so blessed by all the folks who donated food and clothing.
We are so thankful for all of our Hope House guests.

Thursday, November 25, 2021 - Lesley Kristine, Jason Real, Geri Mayo Happy Thanksgiving from Hope House

A total of 16 guests signed in, 3 after HH closed. Today was a food-only day. No showers or laundry were available. Lesley and Jason worked so hard today. They processed both food and clothing donations. The clothing boutique looks amazing. They cleared the breakfast table, served lunch, washed dishes, took out trash and cleaned.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

Thursday, November 25, 2021 - Lesley Kristine, Jason Real, Geri Mayo, Continued

Breakfast consisted of scrambled eggs and biscuits, cereal, instant oatmeal and grits. Coffee, co-coa, punch, and bottled water were the beverage choices.

Geri did not give a formal devotion. Instead, she listed the things she wished for all the HH guests:

They make Jesus their Lord and Savior.

They're free from all addictions, afflictions and disorders.

They are off the streets.

She told them even though they make her crazy or angry, or if she's grumpy, she still loves them. They were asked to write down on a 3x5 card what they are thankful for. Luz will ask guests on Friday and Saturday, as well. The cards will be posted on a wall at Hope House.

It was an amazing Thanksgiving Day lunch. Thank you, Marie and Bill for providing the funds for the lunch. You are missed. A special thanks to Ms. Bianca for the pineapple gravy, sweet potatoes and the beautiful tres leches cake.

Our guests were served spiral cut ham, pineapple gravy, cranberry sauce, homemade mac and cheese, sweet potatoes, baked beans, fresh collard greens, baked potatoes, and Hawaiian rolls. Soda was added to the beverage choices. The desserts were tres leches cake, pumpkin pie with Reddi Wip, and mini cherry or apple pies.

Instead of sandwiches, every guest was offered a to-go plate. They also received a goodie bag and were able to choose one canned good and one snack from our pantry.

Ms. Luz and her husband, Marco arrived at HH with bottles of water and food donations. Their pastor visited as well. After their pastor left, this wonderful couple helped with the clean-up. Usually, HH closes by 1:30 - 2:00 pm. They were there after 3:00. This was a blessing as they were able to provide meals to 3 people who missed lunch. God is good.

So very grateful for our Hope House family.





Birthdays in December

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
12/9	Elijah Wiley
12/11	Beverly Heinrich
12/11	Henry Zona
12/14	Linda Smucker
12/16	Debra Berry
12/17	Paul Havel
12/17	Beverly Hines
12/20	Kristie Otte
12/22	Ginger Fredrikson
12/26	Ann Kneeland
12/26	Rich Thomas
12/28	Glenda Hess
12/28	Phyllis Kitchens
12/29	Virginia Collins



Anniversaries in December

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
12/10	Phyllis and Dwight Kitchens
12/12	Sue and Bob Holmes
12/19	Jean and Ray Welch
12/21	Maria and Rich Thomas
12/22	Tammie and Steve Schertzer

