



THE GOOD NEWS

Lake Gibson United Methodist Church

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



From the Pastor

Thank You, Lord! Thank you that we made it to 2022. After back-to-back years of a pandemic, unprecedented natural disasters, political discord and all the other problems we have experienced in the previous two years, I am sure we are all looking forward in hopeful expectation of a better year in 2022. Will it be better or will the virus mutate again? Will inflation spiral out of control? Will jobs rebound? Will the supply chain be reconnected?

Only God knows the answers to these questions, but I remind you He and He alone is in control. On Christmas Eve we read these words from the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 5: **⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.** Jesus Christ is the light that came into a dark world and the darkness could not overcome it.

We definitely live in a dark world and many of us feel the darkness is winning. Yet there are bursts of light occurring in many places. In the midst of the storms people from around the world are sending aid. It is not common knowledge but behind the scenes in the Middle East the Christian church is growing at exponential rates.

In our own church while the pandemic limited our numbers attending worship in-person, we are reaching twice the people we did before with the Live-Casts and recorded services. Because of the economy we are seeing more and more people needing assistance, and we have been able to meet that need – thanks to you and your generosity. During this dark time, we have been able to upgrade our air-handling system, adapt the sanctuary to meet the new requirements of spacing and cameras, and put a roof on the office. Perhaps we are looking at the circumstances that surround us in the wrong way.

A flashlight or lantern is not needed in the daylight, but when it is dark that same source of light is valuable. When everything is going well and there is no need, we often forget about God, but when things are bleak and dark, we look for his light. Perhaps we should look at the days that we are living in as great opportunities for the church to do what it is supposed to do – give light and hope to the world through Jesus Christ.

What if this New Year we began not looking for a better year, but for a brighter light to shine in our world for Jesus? The same darkness John spoke of in his Gospel is in the world today, and in that darkness Jesus Christ still shines. We as the church and as followers of Jesus were instructed by Jesus with these words: **¹⁶"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven"**. Matthew 5:16 (NRSV).

Also remember as Mordecai told Esther: "You were born for such a time as this." So, let your light shine brightly for the glory of God!!!

Happy New Year 2022 !!!

Pastor Steve

Virtual Support Group for Caregivers Supporting Someone Living with Memory Loss

by Vicky Pitner, First UMC Lakeland

Becoming a caregiver for someone living with memory loss can bring fear, sadness, feelings of being overwhelmed, anger, and even helplessness. It is shocking and confusing when your family member's behaviors change, and you are unprepared to manage the mood swings, or even the depression your family member may experience. Until you can begin to **understand** what's causing the changes, you just don't know what you can do about it.

Finding answers, support and connecting with others who understand and can relate to what you're are going through will be the first step in building your toolbox and tackling this new challenge. That is why our **Memory Ministry is offering a Virtual Caregivers Support Group** on Tuesday evenings, 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom. Research shows that support groups are effective in reducing caregiver burden, and gaining a sense of empowerment, control or hope.

The First UMC Virtual Support Group for Caregivers will offer opportunities for caregivers to:

- feel less lonely or isolated.
- reduce distress, depression, anxiety or fatigue
- talk openly and honestly about your feelings
- learning strategies and skills to cope with the challenges
- bring together people who are going through or have gone through similar experiences.

When: Tuesday evenings

Time: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82814623472?pwd=NUJLVUNDSm51TmxTQzJvYWtIN0J2QT09>

Meeting ID: 828 1462 3472

Passcode: 310700

The Support Group will be facilitated by Vicky Pitner, a Certified Dementia Practitioner and Coordinator of the FUMC Memory Ministry. If you need more information about the Memory Ministry and services we offer, please contact Vicky Pitner, vpitner@firstumc.org or 863-686-3163, ext. 275.

Lake Gibson UMC has been invited to participate in this support group.

Pastor Steve at the Christmas Eve candlelight service



2021 Food Pantry Report

Bags of Groceries	654
Bags of Bread and Dessert	644

These numbers include estimates for the last two weeks of December. The difference between the groceries and bread/dessert numbers is probably due to people coming at times other than Thursday morning pantry hours, when there are no Publix bakery donations. I suspect we miss counting a lot of people who come on other days for food.

On Thursday, December 16th, the church reported the following: We have had an increase in the needs of our food pantry. We have had 20+ recipients each week for the last 6 weeks, compared to our usual range of 12 to 15. The most needed items are the following:

- Spaghetti sauce
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Canned soups (any except tomato)

Any donations will help. Thanks for your support.

Thanks,
Ann Johnson

Correction to December Issue:

Pickup Crews for Publix Baked Goods

The information on the 2-person teams who pick up Publix baked goods on Saturday nights and Wednesday nights was incomplete. We currently have two teams that alternate weeks on each pickup night:

Saturday night (for bakery goods on Sunday): Cathy and Don D'Amato (1st and 3rd weeks) alternating with Sandy Stanfield and Dave McPherson (2nd and 4th weeks). Teams will decide which one picks up from Publix on 5th weeks.

Wednesday night (for Food Pantry on Thursday): Lynn Meske and Tom Burns (1st and 3rd weeks) alternating with Phyllis and Dwight Kitchens (2nd, 4th and 5th (if needed) weeks).

We are looking for people who would like to act as back-ups if a team member isn't available. Please call Ann Johnson, 863-450-2765, if you would like to be on the back-up list.

Phyllis Kitchens

Financial Report

There is no Financial Report in this issue. Because this report is based on the previous month's transactions, the data for this issue would reflect November's information.

Next month's newsletter will contain end-of-year 2021 financial data.

Rummage (or Sidewalk) Sale Planned for January 28 and 29, 2022

Subject to the status of COVID-19 in Lakeland and Polk County, and guidance from Pastor Steve and the Florida Conference, we will decide by the January 10th UMW Leadership Team meeting whether the sale is ON or not, and whether it will be outdoors (sidewalk sale) or indoors (rummage sale), or a combination of the two.

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/sidewalk sale. Setup will be on Thursday, the 27th, starting at 9:00 am. 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 predominantly in our local area, which 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 them, lack of space to store large items, and unwillingness of other charities to accept these 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

Thank you one and all for the donations of sox for the "Pick a Pair" sox project. The sox box was kept full, which kept me busy sorting, bagging, marking and hanging them. Two hundred and forty-six (246) pairs of men's, women's and children's sox were hung on the clothesline and bushes in the LGUMC courtyard. Every time I came by the church there were empty spaces to fill. Any left will be given to Padgett and Wendell Watson Elementary Schools and to Hope House.

If you want to continue giving sox, you might consider putting them in a bag with a bottle of water, a granola bar and any other small items, and handing them to one of the people standing on the street corners of our community.

We are a giving church. As we bless others, we are blessed. Again, a **big thanks to you.**

Peter said, ***"I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you."*** (Acts 3:6)

Linda Alvarez, Missions Coordinator



Bob Herrick narrates the 2021 Christmas cantata.

Happy New Year from Prayer Ministry



"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them and give thanks". 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NLT)

Welcome, Prayer Warriors to a New Year of Praying for others as Christians in faith and service to our God. We give thanks to our Prayer Warriors for their dedication to God's calling us to pray for one another and being a part of our prayer ministry outreach. Whether you have served faithfully for years, or if you have joined our prayer email team this past year, we give thanks for your service.

We thank God for the special connection of Christian faith. Blessings for good health and dedication to our mission in the New Year.

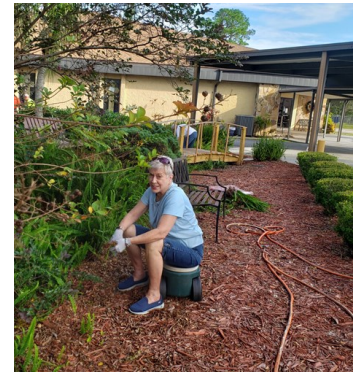
Grace and Peace to all,

Prayer Ministry
Fran

Church Work Day and Fellowship Luncheon Saturday, December 18th

Thanks to everyone who worked on the landscaping around the church entrance and the Spadafora Memorial Garden. Much fun was had by all: Tom Burns, John Bernat, Michael Moake, Leon Rumohr, Gary Mudge, Sandy Stanfield, Kathy Rumohr, Anne Bernat and Phyllis Kitchens. (If I've left anyone out, please forgive me.)

Thanks also to the kitchen crew for the hotdog lunch: Dwight Kitchens cooked and Lynn Meske and Linda Imel provided entertainment and helped with cleanup. Rochelle McBride and Kristie and Lexie Otte joined us for lunch after the final cantata rehearsal.



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

Commentary on December Article by Martin Thielen

by Maria Thomas

My heart was broken as I read Martin Thielen's article [*The Toxic Evangelical Variant*, November 1, 2021, from his Doubter's Parish blog] in last month's newsletter. He starts off by saying what a blessing the evangelical Church was to him. There here he was loved and he found family. There he was educated. There he was introduced to the God of the universe and found meaningful service and a way to express his love for Jesus through his vocation. Still he felt the need to move to a more "progressive" form of Christianity.

In one big way he is correct. Many parts of "The Church" failed the people when it came to slavery in the Civil War era and Jim Crow laws as late as the 1960's as well as many opportunities the Lord gave us in between. The critical race issues of today could have been avoided if only we had stood up to that discrimination. I admire my Quaker brothers and sisters who responded to this issue much faster and better than most did.

However, Mr. Thielen's assertion that we who disagree with him on certain points are "toxic" is as misinformed as anyone who calls himself a Christian can get. What he really wants at best is to ignore certain teachings in the Bible, and at worst to call it a hate book. He says we are toxic because we are angry "all the time". Enraged over things like abortion, transgender bathrooms, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and vaccine mandates, etc." He is quite right. Many of us are righteously angry over the killing of the unborn! I love what Dr. Ben Carson said regarding babies in the womb. He said "I have done in utero surgery on a baby in the womb and I can assure you it is alive!" We also are angry about transgender bathrooms that open the door to all kinds of pedophiles!

CRT wants to demean a whole race of children from kindergarten thru college. I don't think Jesus would approve of that either. And vaccines that use aborted baby parts to either to test them or as an actual part of the vaccine cannot be taken by those of us whose consciences say not to. I believe Mr. Thielen is the one who is in the wrong because he wants us all of us to agree with him on these issues or be considered toxic.

We are equally toxic if we don't believe in evolution (a fact, not a theory, to him [Thielen]), or if we don't believe in climate change or (once again) the COVID vaccines. He says we oppress women and require "submission to their husbands." I honestly don't think he truly understands what submission really means, OR the powerful role women play in all areas of society. Without demeaning the amazing role women play in the workforce, I agree fundamentally with the statement that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Women are the most influential creatures on earth! Consider Susanna Wesley!

He says we hurt the LBGQT community. I hate it when I hear an ill-informed Christian tell a gay person that they are an abomination to God. Because, guess what? So were you before you repented

Continued on the next page . . .

Commentary on December Article by Martin Thielen, Continued

and turned your life over to Jesus! God does not hate LGBTQ people. He loves them enough to want to win their hearts and tell them the truth. He is all about transformation. I know that's true because I see it in the Bible and have experienced it for myself. If you know me now and also knew me before Jesus came into my life, you would know what a miracle looks like! Jesus loves us enough to tell us the truth. EVERYONE has issues and needs God to deal with them.

My son has a Doctorate in Psychology from Regent University. One young lady in his cohort was admittedly gay. BUT, she chose not to act on her feelings because she saw clearly in the Bible that acting on her feelings would be sinful. At the same time, she was looking to God to transform her physical desires as He had her spiritual desires. But whether He did or not, she was going to remain true to His Word. Often after healing someone Jesus would tell them to "go and sin no more." Those are my goals, too: to stay true to the Word of God, even if someone thinks I'm toxic, and to stop intentionally sinning when God has corrected me. How does one explain away Romans chapter 1, the book of Jude, and the teaching of the entire Old Testament beginning with God "created them male and female?"

Then we come to the definition of Evangelical. Answers given by those asked really make one wonder just WHO was being asked [in Mr. Thielen's article] to define the word. Evangelical means *messenger* (evangel in Greek) who shares the Good News. An Evangelical Church is one that shares the Good News of Jesus sent by God to pay the penalty for sin and provide a way back to Him. I'm pretty sure that the Church that did so much for Mr. Thielen in the beginning of his spiritual journey told him that.

We get into serious spiritual trouble when we start trying to make God or His Word conform to our particular way of thinking. I absolutely agree that Jesus was all about love, kindness, mercy, inclusion, grace, compassion and justice. He was also about Truth. Jesus told Pilate that the reason He came, the reason He was sent into the world, was to tell us the Truth. Jesus is Truth and the Word of God is our plumb line. Without it there would only be "your truth" and "my truth." Truth leads to transformation. It's the "truth that sets you free." God's truth. Not your truth or my truth. Proverbs 14:12 says "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*"

Thielen then suggests we leave Churches that teach these life-giving truths, and find a progressive one that sees the Word of God as flexible. One that keeps up with the culture. I would say to him culture changes, but God's Word has stood the test of time. God Himself is the same yesterday, today and forever. Good religion will always hold out the Word of Truth with love and compassion. Jesus holds the Word of life out to you, Mr. Thielen. In Revelation 2, in speaking to the Church in Ephesus, He says in Revelation 2:2-5 "*I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance . . . you have persevered and endured hardships for my Name and have not grown weary. Yet this I hold against you: you have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen and do the things you did at first.*" Look into your heart Mr. Thielen and come home to the real Jesus who loves us too much to leave us as we are.

Maria Thomas



Contact Information

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

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

Sue Heishman, Bookkeeper

Glenda Grant Hess, Music Director

Leon Rumohr, Custodian

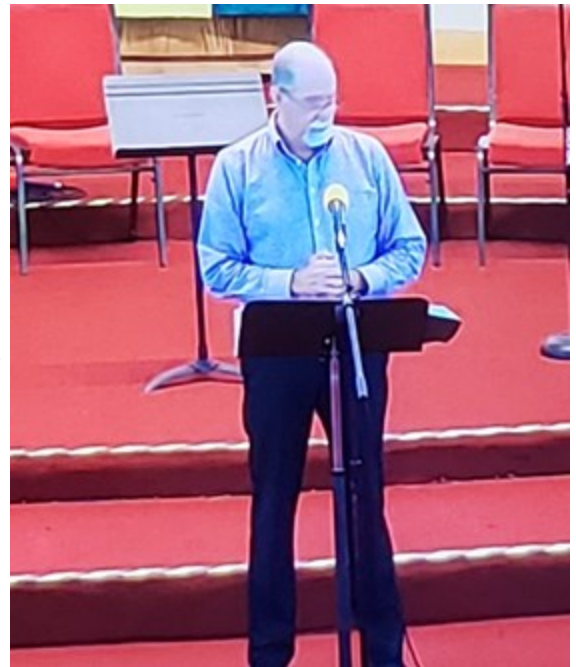
Latisha Cook, Director of A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center, 863-858-8400.

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



Bob Willome leading hymns at the Christmas Eve service.

Mike Stafford, 2022 Lay Leader, making announcements before a worship service.



Thanks again to Cindy Webb for her photographs which are located throughout this issue. Other pictures are by Dwight or Phyllis Kitchens.

United Methodist Men (UMM)

On December 18, 2021, the UMM held their monthly meeting in conjunction with a Church workday to spruce up grounds around the sanctuary, including the Spadafora Memorial Garden. We cleaned up the grounds in these areas and replaced the mulch that was sun burned. This was done with the help of church members as well as the UMM members. It was a task that was accomplished with the team effort of all concerned.

The UMM would like to thank all who helped support this project. After the project was completed we had a lunch consisting of hot dogs, chips, sodas, condiments and cookies which were prepared by Dwight Kitchens and the ladies from the UMW. It was a joyous event full of fellowship.

The UMM have several new projects planned for the upcoming year. We are going to have our second **classic car and motorcycle show** with food and prizes for all. We will attempt to bring back the **Easter** event in April if the COVID cases have reduced in numbers. We will continue to support the church and anyone who has need of our assistance. We are still in need of members to join our ranks and offer their input as well as time to help support the Church.

As we approach the upcoming New Year let us not dwell on the past events of this year of hardship and family conflict as well as social distancing that may have led some people to hold resentment toward others, or which may have had an impact upon our Church as well as the community. Let us even in this time of stress and in some cases isolation from family and friends, remember that it is the Lord our Savior who will one day return and lift us up, unto His glorious kingdom.

If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to one of the UMM members or call Michael Moake, UMM President, cell number 386-965-0170.

United Methodist Women (UMW)

The UMW held its joint circle meeting and Christmas luncheon on Wednesday, December 1st in the FLC. We discussed chapters 3 and 4 of Max Lucado's book *We Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence and Power*. The next joint circle meeting will be **Wednesday, January 5th, 10:30 to noon in the FLC**. We will discuss chapters 5 and 6 of the book, including the questions for each chapter. All women are invited to attend, whether you're a member of the UMW or not.

The UMW Leadership Team (Phyllis Kitchens, President; Linda Alvarez, Secretary; Sarah Schiemann, Treasurer; Ruth Zona, Heart to Heart Circle Facilitator; Pat Moon, Ruth Circle of Love Facilitator; and Lynn Meske, Rummage Sale Committee Chair) met on November 22nd. Significant business included the Treasurer's report by Sarah Schiemann. The annual UMW Thank Offering is ready to be sent to the Gulf Central District. We will also donate \$1,000 to the church's Jerusalem Fund (for short-term financial needs).

Changes for the next joint circle meeting will include having a sign-in sheet at the door and streamlining the opening activities. There will be no devotion, just an opening prayer and reading of the UMW Purpose. We agreed that more time is needed for discussions of the thought-provoking questions. Ruth Zona and Pat Moon will both facilitate the joint meetings. A work order has been submitted to the Custodian to move the Purpose wall hanging from the Fellowship Hall into Classroom 1. Copies may be passed out for members to keep in their books.

Our unit adopted 25 Senior Orphans this year, and there was so much enthusiasm for this project that next year we plan to get more names earlier in the year. Christmas tray cards that members made

Continued on the next page . . .

United Methodist Women, Continued

from old Christmas cards were taken to New Era Assisted Living down the street. Sandy Stanfield agreed to check other nursing homes to see who could use the tray cards.

Please bring Christmas and other greeting cards (Easter, Valentine's Day, etc.) you have received to Merry Matters workshops, or drop them off in the church office labeled "for UMW", or give them to a Leadership Team member so we can recycle them to brighten someone's day.

The next rummage sale is planned for Jan 28th (9:00 am - 3:00 pm) and 29th (9:00 am – 2:00 pm). Lynn Meske is organizing a large donation of jewelry, and working on signage and handouts.

Pat Moon went over pecan sales; \$376.00 profit made so far. There are a few bags left, cinnamon and chocolate only.

The next Leadership Team meeting will be **January 10th at 11:00 am in the FLC.**

Merry Matters

Merry Matters met on December 8th in the FLC from 10:00 am to noon. The first project to complete was the **Senior Orphans of Polk County Wish List**. We wrapped and delivered a total of **75 gifts to fulfill the Christmas wishes of 25 less fortunate senior citizens**. Now we know how Santa feels. A HUGE thank you to all the United Methodist Women who contributed in any way. It was a large task, but everyone stepped up and did a truly amazing job. I look forward to this rewarding project in 2022, hopefully with an earlier start in the year and more wishes to fulfill.

The next project to complete was the **hand-made Christmas cards**. Pat Moon suggested and led this project. A total of 90 cards were made and delivered to the nearby New Era Assisted Living facility on Monday, December 13th. The cards were designed to be viewed from both sides and will be perfect for the dining area tables or enjoyed by residents in their rooms. I doubt we will give Hallmark any competition, but our cards were beautiful and came from the heart of everyone involved. A huge, **HUGE** thank-you to everyone from the UMW who contributed their talents to making this project such an awesome success.

The completion of both of these new projects filled everyone with the true meaning of the Christmas spirit. We enjoyed the Christmas card project so much that we are looking toward to doing it again, so **PLEASE DO NOT throw out the Christmas or other cards you have received**. We will be able to use any and all cards or old calendars. It has been suggested we do a project like this for **Easter**. Let us know what you think.

We will continue to work on making plastic yarn (plarn) and crocheting ground mats for the homeless with the Merry Matters group on the **second and fourth Wednesday of each month**. All are welcome; bring a neighbor or friend. We can also make room for people working on other craft projects, if you would like to join us. Everyone is invited to participate. If you have any questions call Lynn Meske at 863-858-3589

Remember, there is no special talent needed to participate in making mats. (Well, maybe a sense of humor?) We have several steps to do before actually getting to the crocheting stage. All are welcome; bring a neighbor, bring a friend, and join us for some laughs and good old-fashioned fellowship.

Lynn Meske

Thank You for Your Generous Support for Guardian ad Litem Youth

Thank you for your donations to Guardian ad Litem. With your help we provided Christmas for 18 teens and over 50 toiletry bags with a special gift for additional teens. We also provided 4 art baskets; 20 adult coloring book sets; 40 makeup, nail care and assorted baskets; and 2 spa-day baskets.

According to our friend from Guardian ad Litem, we were one of the few organizations providing gifts for teenagers. They were so appreciative of the many gifts they could give to their teens. These kids are always so happy with your donations. Words can't convey our gratitude. These gifts provided the only Christmas they received, and made them feel special and loved.

God bless you all for your generous donations.

Cindy Webb and Bev Henrich



#StillInMission Episode 38 January 6, 2022, 7:00 PM EST

We hope you will join us in the first Zoom presentation of 2022 as we explore the transforming work of **United Methodist missionaries** serving around the world. You will have the opportunity to meet in a small group **to hear a presentation from a single missionary** during the call. Find out more about these missionaries below, or at www.umcmision.org.

[A. Broncano](#) serves as the Coordinator for the English Language Program with the United Methodist Mission in Southeast Asia.

[John Elmore](#) serves as the Volunteers in Mission Coordinator with Iglesia Metodista de Chile.

[K. Cruz](#) serves as a CHAD (Community, Health, and Agricultural Development) advisor with the United Methodist Mission in Southeast Asia.

[Megan Marie Rittenberry](#) serves as a Market Service Associate with the Detroit Conference in the United States.

[To register, click here.](#) Registration is required.

Please select the one missionary you want to learn more about. For details click on the names to read their biographies and descriptions of their current missions.

Learn More About National CROP Hunger Walk

The Lakeland CROP Hunger Walk is scheduled for **Sunday, February 27th at 1:00 pm**. If you're interested in learning more about this vital fund-raising program which is sponsored by *Church World Service*, please check out the links below. Walking can be in-person starting at First Presbyterian Church, 175 Lake Hollingsworth Drive, Lakeland or wherever and whenever you choose to walk. Ask your neighbors, family and friends to sponsor you as a way to support this worthy organization.

If you were not able to join the virtual **National CROP Hunger Walk Celebration** in early December, there was a wonderful turnout and the program was really inspiring. The recording can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/MN_NRvB0Z7w. The program begins around the **10-minute mark**, with the introduction being photos of CROP Hunger Walks across the country.

You can also see some of the individual videos used in the Celebration on the **CROP Hunger Walk Facebook page**: <https://www.facebook.com/CROPHungerWalk>. So far \$5.9 million was raised in 2021 to support missions of *Church World Service*.

We hope you will donate to CROP Hunger Walk and, if able, join us on February 27th in a leisurely stroll around (some part of) beautiful Lake Hollingsworth. Please bring a nonperishable food item for a local food pantry, too.

Need a Name Tag?

You can download the name tag order form and fill it in on-line to order a church nametag on our website, <https://lakegibsonumc.com/contact-us/name-tags/>. You can also print a copy of the form, fill it in by hand and send it to the church office. The cost is \$10.00 each and the one option offered is whether to have a pin backing or a magnetic backing. On the church website, this information is at the very bottom of the home page, in the blue background area, in the column titled Contact Us (click on **Name Badges**).

Settlement in Boy Scouts Pending Bankruptcy

United Methodist Communications
Office of Public Information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2021

United Methodist leaders have reached a settlement in the matter of the Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) pending bankruptcy proceedings. Upon final court approval, the settlement would resolve any claims of sexual abuse that may have occurred in congregation-sponsored Scouting programs.

Under the terms of the settlement, United Methodists would raise and give \$30 million over a three-year period into a fund that will be utilized to compensate survivors, and United Methodist congregations that charter Scout troops and packs would be released from all abuse claims involving Scouting activities. A team has been formed to identify strategies and materials that may be used to raise the funds. The church would also agree to work for the healing of survivors and recommit to work toward ending sexual abuse of young people. Through the General Commission on United Methodist Men, United Methodists will work with the BSA to continue to ensure Scout safety and grow Scouting ministry as part of its mandate through *The Book of Discipline*.

"We are sorry for what occurred and are praying for all those who experienced harm through Scouting activities. We are committed to the protection of children and youth, and the United Methodist Council of Bishops will be working with the church, the Survivor Working Group and BSA to address policies, programs, and procedures in order to keep Scouts safe from abuse," said Bishop John Schol, chair of the UMC leadership team created to support the United Methodist chartering organizations in the bankruptcy matter.

The settlement follows months of mediation by an Ad Hoc committee of bishops, chancellors and general agency employees that has been advocating for United Methodist interests.

"I want to thank everyone who has been working through the mediation process for the healing and just resolution of the survivors," said Schol. "Our settlement agreement has the support of both the BSA and the Coalition of Abused Scouts for Justice."

The United Methodist Church has long worked proactively to prevent child abuse. The percentage of claims in the last 20 years potentially related to United Methodist congregations-sponsored scouting units is less than 1 percent of all UMC claims.

Under the terms of the agreement, denomination leaders will intensify efforts to prevent and raise awareness of child sexual abuse.

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church has committed to lead the church in carrying out the following:

- Work with all United Methodists to raise funds for the Survivor Trust Fund.
- Tell the story of harm done to survivors through a series of articles to be published by the denomination and by each U.S. annual conference to draw attention to child sexual abuse and call upon the church to be vigilant in working to prevent child sexual abuse in churches, homes and the community.

Continued on the next page . . .

Settlement in Boy Scouts Pending Bankruptcy, Continued

- Carry out a denomination-wide review of all Safe Sanctuaries and other policies to safeguard young people from sexual abuse and update policies as necessary and ensure the policies are being followed.
- Provide opportunities for sexual abuse survivors to share their experiences with United Methodist leadership if they choose to do so.
- Work with all United Methodist ministries and with the Boy Scouts of America to continue to make programs safe for all young people.
- Provide leadership to help all BSA chartering organizations to make a \$100 million contribution to the Survivor Trust Fund. [Editor: This action applies to the UMC and all other chartering organizations.] Participate as a member of the Survivors Working Group

The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that churches who filed a proof of claim vote “yes” on the plan and for those who previously voted “no,” the Ad Hoc Committee recommends congregations change their vote to “yes.” An email from conference leadership will be sent to churches that filed a proof of claim on how to vote “yes” and how to change a vote from “no” to “yes.”

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Hope House Happenings

(Excerpts from Volunteer Reports)

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 - Debbie and Rick McLellan

We are still following COVID-19 restrictions, had tables set up for lunch and jointly maintained social distancing. It was a very warm day with our guests in the front yard and in the patio area. We require everyone who goes inside the House to wear a mask; only 2 at a time allowed inside.

By the end of the day, we had served 15 guests. Rick McLellan led in prayer and a devotion from Romans, GOOD AND BAD NEWS from *The Romans Road*.

Our guests were served a meal by Chef Dick McPherson, who again 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 meat loaf, with broccoli and macaroni salad. Our brown to-go bag included a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a bag of chips, a pack of Lance crackers, a pudding cup, an Oreo 6-pack, and a box of raisins. To quench thirst was ice-cold bottled water with a flavor packet, and canned Coca-Cola. 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 their supper. We also fed the Hope House kitties.

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

We brought sanitized towels and wash cloths for showers, and gave each guest a towel, washcloth and hygiene kit. We had 6 guests request showers and 3 guests who used the laundry.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope House Happenings, Continued

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 - Debbie and Rick McLellan, Continued

We had a visit from our friends at Christ the King Episcopal Church, who brought us items given to our guests today. We received a donation and some useful items from Charles and Linda Alvarez, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. Our brown bag items and Pocket New Testaments issued were provided by Lake Gibson United Methodist Church.

Our guests had an attitude of gratitude today, and we feel that Jesus is using the Hope Center to touch hearts and make a real difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

Tuesday, December 21, 2021 - Debbie and Rick McLellan

By the end of the day, we had served 12 guests. Rick McLellan led in prayer and a devotion from Matthew 3, GOD IS WELL PLEASED. Our guests were served a meal by Chef Dick McPherson, who again was our hero, stepping in 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 fabulous pulled-pork, with mac'n cheese, and cole slaw. Our brown to-go bag included a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a bag of chips, a pack of Lance crackers, a pudding cup, a bag of Famous Amos cookies, and an applesauce cup. To quench thirst was ice-cold bottled water with a flavor packet, and canned Coca-Cola. 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 had lots of donations from our friends and many, very useful items were provided for those less fortunate. We want to especially thank Harry Card, a military veteran and former Hope Center volunteer, Julio Santana from Bread of Life ministries, the employees of Lakeland Electric, Polk City Baptist Church, and our friends Tammy and Kevin. Bob Herrick, from Lake Gibson United Methodist Church, brought some terrific personal care items in shoe boxes for our male and female guests that were assembled by the men of American Legion Post 4 in Lakeland.

Our guests had an attitude of gratitude today, and their desire is to tell our donors

THANK YOU AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!





Reminder: Need Meals for Bike Hope Love Tour (Dinner, February 2nd and Breakfast, February 3rd)

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**, a Pan-African United Methodist institution in Zimbabwe. Increasing enrollment at AU and a lack of on-campus housing means that some students commute from remote areas, or 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]

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.

Today these former "Pedaling Parsons" aren't just clergy, but are made up of both pastors and laypeople. 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."





Birthdays in January

<u>Date</u>	<u>Names</u>
1/1	Jamie Collins
1/1	Joyce Thompson
1/2	Joe Moon
1/4	Rochelle McBride
1/7	Kathy Rumohr
1/11	Lexie Otte
1/12	Todd Bower
1/16	Ramona Kendall
1/20	Bob Bleam
1/20	Donna Pardis
1/20	Abba Schmidt
1/20	Issac Wiley
1/21	Shirley Lux
1/24	Anthony Wilde
1/26	Barb Allen-Coil
1/27	Linda Alvarez
1/27	Ruth Zona
1/30	Jackie Webb



There are no anniversaries in January according to the church's Servant Keeper database.

Please let Kristie know if this information is incorrect (863-858-5431).