# Good Dews!

# Christmas Reflections "The Coming of our Lord"

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During this Holy season, we remember the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Paul identifies him as the Second Adam, who is of heaven (1 Cor. 15: 47). He came down to give us second birth into the family of God. At



Advent and Christmas, we remember his first coming in the incarnation, God become human. We also remember and look forward to his second coming, when he will return to earth on the clouds with great power and glory to gather his elect from the four corners of the heavens.

In the first case, we remember the ancient prophecies about the messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. The Old Testament prophets foretold the messiah would be the Son of God (Psalm 2:7), born from the seed of a woman (Genesis 3: 15), born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2), a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), of the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-14a), in the time of the Romans (Daniel 9:24-27), to live a sinless and pure life (Isaiah 53:9), and die as a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins (Isaiah 53:10), to bring in the kingdom and everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24), who would rise from death after his suffering (Isaiah 53:11-12; Psalm 16:8-11), who would be the final king of Israel (2 Samuel 7:13), whose kingdom would extend to the ends of the world (Psalm 2:8), and whose kingdom would never pass away (Daniel 7:14).

All these ancient promises and hundreds more have been fulfilled in Jesus. This is one of the reasons we believe he is the true messiah. Those prophecies point to him and him only, as true signs. No other person in all of history comes close to fulfilling all those signs.

We also remember the promises about Christ's second coming, when he will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to redeem his own and judge the world. There are many prophecies about that: three chapters in the gospels list them: Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. The gospel must first be preached to all nations (Mark 13:10); Christ will come in a time of great rebellion against God (Daniel 8:12-13; 2 Thes. 2:3); he will not return until the man of lawlessness is revealed and sets his image up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (Daniel 11:31; 2 Thes. 2:4); at that time, the nations of the world will be gathered against Jerusalem and Israel (Zechariah 12:3); when the Messiah returns, the whole world will see him, leading the armies of heaven with great power and glory (Matthew 24:30); he will stand once more on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4); he will destroy the man of lawlessness by the breath of his mouth (2 Thes. 2:8).

"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens." (Mark 13:26-27).

We who hold all these promises dear, let us greet Christmas in the time of grace, with gratitude and joy, and wait patiently for our Lord's return, staying awake and serving faithfully so we are ready when he arrives.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

In Christ's Love, Pastor Chris Fisher

# Worship Conversations



Dear Congregation.

I have received many comments on our new 9 AM worship service since Ad Board's approval. Most comments are from folks who are happy with the new service and happy to be worshipping together. I have heard from some folks who are sorely missing certain familiar worship elements. They have requested traditional hymns, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Holy Communion served more formally at the altar rails. Others say they enjoy the features of the contemporary style. What to do?

Ad Board considered the fall worship survey. Of about 100 respondents to the survey, ~45 said continue with one service, ~21 said go back to two services, and ~34 said it didn't matter. Realizing it is impossible to please everyone, the Board voted to continue with one service. Perhaps most important was the need to be together at this time.

One issue that was not solved by the Board was the question of worship style. We have folks with different generational and cultural style preferences. Though it is impossible to please everyone all the time, we do want to have worship services that build up the body of Christ. In response to these recent requests, we have begun adding more familiar hymns to the order of worship. We will also be serving Holy Communion at the altar rail on Epiphany Sunday.

As we seek to order worship that is edifying to all, I invite you to consider a few things. Scripture does not provide much guidance about the form of worship in the New Testament. The outpouring of tongues in Acts 2 shows God is pleased with worship in all kinds of cultural and linguistic forms. Paul gives a few directions in 1 Corinthians. He writes: "When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up" (14:26). He also teaches that worship should be orderly: "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (14:33). Orderly worship can

be done in a variety of cultural styles and still be pleasing to God.

Paul provides no detail about worship style, no liturgy or script to follow; nor is one given elsewhere in scripture, except perhaps some hints in the Psalms and Temple worship accounts. The emphasis in 1 Corinthians is on God's people having the right attitude of love towards one another as the basic essential of godly worship. We are there to encourage one another and build each other up. Worship without such love is not just an offense to God, but an invitation to judgment (1 Cor. 11:29).

Love is not self-seeking but defers to the needs of others. Personally, I love many great hymns, with their familiar melodies and deep theology. I also love many contemporary worship songs and find them rousing and inspiring. But just as I don't like some hymns for their bland tunes or mediocre theology, I am also not crazy about some contemporary songs that seem to me overly repetitive or shallow. I suspect most of us have similarly eclectic tastes. The question is, are we each willing to surrender our style preferences for the sake of others who may need a different worship element to be edified? Not all the time, but some of the time? We can take turns doing that so that everyone has a chance to be built up by what edifies them

If we each consider others needs ahead of our own, and if we each contribute something God lays on our hearts, God will use the whole mix to build up the body of Christ! That sounds a lot like 1 Cor. 14:26: "When you come together, each of you has [something different to share]... Everything must be done so that the church may be built up."

The enemy would like to interfere with love by sowing seeds of discord and discontent. We must stay two steps ahead of him. Let us forbear criticizing each other. If you have a hymn, a contemporary song, a word of instruction or scripture to share, let it be known! Don't hide it and then feel bad and give the enemy room to play! Thank you to those who have shared with me what you need to be edified.

Our worship leaders are prayerfully working on these things, realizing our congregation has folks with diverse style preferences. Our goal is to have Spirit-filled and orderly worship where everyone experiences God and is built up in faith and love. Let us together pray for the Spirit's leading in this.

# First UMC will hold informational sessions to prepare for General Conference 2020

First UMC will be organizing some congregational information sessions this winter as the UM denomination prepares for General Conference 2020. Many plans are afoot, including the possibility the denomination may divide over theological differences. No one knows for sure what will happen, but our Administrative Board believes we should be informed and prepared for what may come next.

The Board also approved hosting a North District event at our church for all the churches of our district to hear presentations by representatives of key plans. The Wesley Covenant Association, of which our church is a member church, is supporting the "Indianapolis Plan," which was crafted by representatives from traditional, progressive and centrist groups including the WCA. This plan would allow amicable separation and the formation of daughter denominations. The WCA holds a traditional understanding of the authority of the Bible as God's word, the transforming power of the gospel, and supports biblical standards for marriage.

Further details on these information sessions will be published when the dates are finalized. Stay tuned.

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# Worship & Preaching Schedule January – February 2020

Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 AM Sunday School/ Small Groups at 10:30 AM GENZ Worship 4:00 PM in the café Saturday Evening Worship 6:00 PM Theme: Healing

Jan 5 Epiphany Sunday w/ Holy Communion at the Altar Rail Jan 12

Jan 19 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

Jan 26 Fellowship Sunday. No Sunday School today Pot-luck brunch right after worship.

Feb 2 Holy Communion w/Holy Communion served in the pews Feb 9

Feb 16

Feb 23 Fellowship Sunday. No Sunday school today Pot-luck brunch after worship

# Our Communion Offerings

January 5: Real Options Pregnancy Center February 2: The Salvation Army, Pottsville

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"GenZ" Worship Service Update
Young Adults have begun the new
Worship Service Sundays at 4:00 PM
followed by Supper



The new worship service targeting young adults began on Sunday evening, November 17 at 4:00 pm, followed immediately by a refreshments and light supper. The service met in the Café, with music lead by Amber Dros, prayer by Luke Fisher, and an interactive message with Pastor Fisher. The GenZ worship service targets the post high-school young adults in worship style but is open to all.

Fellowship Hall to be refurbished. The team working on refurbishing the Fellowship Hall continues its work. This will benefit the whole church, as the goal is to make an eye-pleasing venue that will be useful for a variety of groups and activities. The next planning conversation is scheduled during the first 2020 Trustees meeting on January 13 at 7:00 PM.

Please pray for the young adults as they embark on this new worship, discipleship and outreach initiative, and consider donating to the Fellowship Hall refurbishment project for the sake of the whole church.

### CHURCH PRAYER MINISTRY UPDATES

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: Church-wide prayer meeting is at 6:00 pm for an Hour of Power together every week. All are welcome!

NOTE: NO PRAYER MEETINGS ON CHRISTMAS DAY OR NEW YEAR'S DAY. PRAY AT HOME!

Prayer Focus for January and February. 1) Pray for our youth and youth ministry, and new leaders for the youth ministry; 2) Pray for healing in our Church: of individuals, families, relationships, and the Body of Christ. 3) Pray for our small group leaders to be effective and for our discipleship ministry to prosper. 4) Pray for homebound, the oppressed, and those in prison. 5) Pray for the United Methodist Denomination and its future, including General Conference 2020. 6) Pray for the lost and broken of Schuylkill County for revival, salvation, and to become new disciples.

Weekly prayer team ministry continues. Please sign up in pairs to pray for one hour a day during a single week, for the Kingdom of God to come more fully in our church and our community and beyond. We promote the prayer team ministry on Sunday mornings with the prayer clipboard circulated periodically.

Do you have a testimony to share with the congregation? Has the Lord done something special in your life recently? You might have a testimony to share and be a blessing to the congregation. It is exciting to hear what God is doing in our midst! Please let one of the pastors know if you want to share.

### Prayer Team Schedule: Jan. - Feb 2020

Prayer Warriors are needed for January and February. The clipboard will be passed on Sunday, December 29, 2019. There will also be a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall, please prayerfully consider signing up for a week of prayer.

Dec. 29 – January 4 – Kristy Kraft January 5-11- JoAnn Daum January 12-18 January 19-15 January 26-February 1 February 2-8 February 9-15 February 16-22 February 23-29

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# Christian Education & Discipleship News



January 5th Sunday school & Small Groups start up again

> January 26 Children's Message

January 26th Fellowship Hour

January 26th Christian Rock-N-Bowl 2-4 PM Strike Zone Allevs

February 7-9th WINTERBLAST!

February 16th Father/ Paughter Pance

February 23rd Children's Message

February 23rd Fellowship Hour

### Did you know?

One of the greatest predicators of whether or not your children will become life-long disciples of Jesus is whether or not they see their parents actively serving.

Service helps you grow in your faith.

The best way to tell others about Jesus is to show them Jesus – Be His Hands & Feet in a hurting world!

Are you feeling called to be hands, feet, voice to our neighbors?

If you're interested in serving on a team that is seeking to engage the community by being Christ's hands and feet, join us for an organizational meeting in January! Keep a look out or

contact April Bergen for more information!

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Every new snowflake comes to the earth as a picture of our Saviour's birth, because they are sent from up above and remind us of God's care and love.

Each one is so intricate and small because Christ sees the detail of us all, and just as two are never the same, the Lord knows and calls us each by name.

Snowflakes gently cover the world in white and hide what's unlovely from our sight, showing us how He covers our sin and gives us His grace when we come to Him.

So may every snowflake bring Christ to mind and in every bit of white may you find a reason to celebrate anew and a reminder of His love for you.

~Holley Gerth~

# Christian Rock-N-Bowl Sunday, January 26th



Enjoy bowling with your friends and family while Christian music videos are displayed on our 14 foot projection screens, Bowling time is from 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM, Only \$10.00 per person.

Includes: 2 hours of Christian bowling, use of balls, and shoe Rental. Kids under 18 will receive a \$2 areade card.

\* \$3.00 per person will be donated back to the participating church.
Please call the center to make your reservations today!



# Faith Community Nurse's Notes

# Ann Moyer FCN, RN

### Hypertension

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, is when the force of blood pressing against the artery walls is too strong. Arteries are the blood vessels that carry blood away from the heart to the body.

The CDC reports that 1of 3 adults in the United States has high blood pressure and only about half of those people have it under control. Hypertension is known as "the silent killer" because there are rarely any symptoms and it quietly damages blood vessels and leads to serious health problems. These health problems include: heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney damage, vision loss and sexual dysfunction.

Blood pressure is written as two numbers. The top number known as systolic is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, diastolic, number is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked. If blood pressure readings are consistently high it is important to consult a health care provider.

Changes in life style can help control blood pressure and reduce risks for harmful effects. These lifestyle changes are as important as taking blood pressure medication as prescribed. They include: eating a diet low in fat and salt, regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, limiting alcohol and not smoking or using any nicotine products.

Managing blood pressure is a lifelong commitment and involves making good choices as well as communicating with your health provider.

Information taken from the American Heart Association website



# Methodist Women Ministries News

Thank you to all who aided in our collection for Seton Manor. It was a great success. With your items and help, we made 11 fidget blankets and 10 walker bags. On Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> the group was at Seton Manor aiding the residents in shopping for donated gifts and then wrapping them. It was heart breaking when they couldn't remember grandchildren's or children's names, but the smiles that they left the room with made it all worthwhile. It gave us new ideas for other nursing homes or retirement centers. More to come.





# Upcoming events:

Jan. 2020- we will be helping Marcy make meat pies to sell for a new mission venture. (look for future advertising)

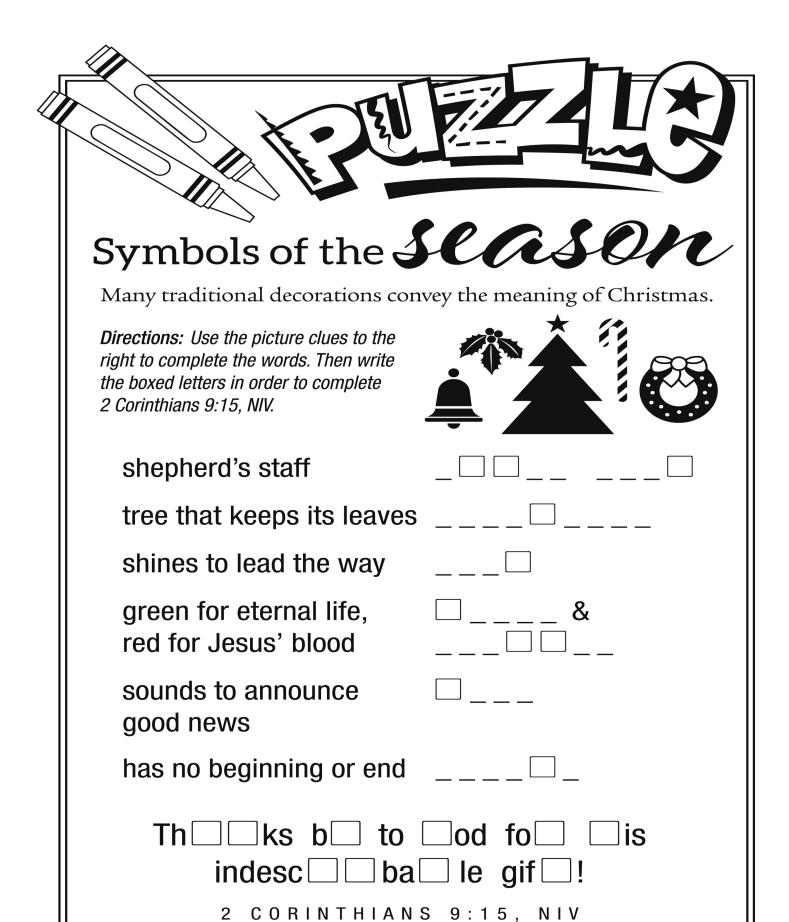
Feb. – we will be collecting socks and undies for prisoners at Schuylkill Prison

# Where the money from the soup sale went:

We were able to send one check for \$150 to Solar Oven Partners UMC for one solar oven. A woman who cooks on a solar oven doesn't need to spend limited money on charcoal or inhale unhealthy smoke. She can earn extra income by selling baked goods that she couldn't make before. Some women in the Dominican Republic have even made handcrafted bars of soap.

Another check for \$200 was sent to Schuylkill Women in Crisis for their programming needs.

Please let us know of other interests or projects you may like us to pursue. Jean



# PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING SCHEDULE 2020

Doc 15			Dec. 28 (21)		
Sept. 15		Children's Discipleship	Sept. 28		
June 16			June 22		Board
Third Tuesday March 17	Third	Health & Welfare	March 23	Fourth Monday	Administrative
Dec. 1			Dec.14		
Sept. 1			Sept.14		
June 2			June 8		
First Tuesday March 3	First T	Missions	March 9	Second Monday	Finance
Nov. 17			Nov. 23		
August 18			August 24		
May 19			May 25 (18)		
Third Tuesday February 18	Third	Communications	February 24	Fourth Monday	SPRC
Nov. 3			Nov. 9		
August 4		Lay Leadership	August 10		
May 5			May 11		
First Tuesday February 4	First T	Fellowship	February 10	Second Monday	Worship
October 20			October 26		
July 21			July 27		
April 21			April 27		
Third Tuesday January 21	Third	Youth Council	January 27	Fourth Monday	Discipleship Council
			(19)		
October 6			October 12		
July 7			July 13		
April 7 (Holy Week)		& Outreach	April 13		
First Tuesday January 7	First T	Community Relations	January 13	Second Monday	Trustees
Day of Week   Month	Day o	Committee	Month	Day of week	Committee



SAVE THE DATE

The Annual Father/Daughter Dance is scheduled for Sunday, February 16, 2020.

Doors will open at 5:30 pm with the music and dancing from 6:00 pm to 8 pm at the Walk-In Art Center in Schuylkill Haven. Music will be provided by DJ. Dave Evans.

Tickets are a must for the special night and are \$8.00/ person. Light refreshments provided.

There will be more details to follow in January. Keep watch on the weekly bulletins, FUMC website, and/or Facebook page.

# 20 Memorable Family Christmas Traditions

By Jim Burns · December 16, 2019 Copyright © 2019 HomeWord Published in Families, Family Activities, Family Life, Family Ministry

Traditions are important for families because they provide opportunities to keep your family legacy going. From the simple to the silly to the sentimental, traditions can create meaningful memories. Don't hesitate to try out some new traditions this Christmas season and see what works and what doesn't for your own family. You just may create a new tradition that will keep going for generations! If you are looking for some fresh ideas in the search for new Christmas traditions, consider the following:

- Try an annual extended-family get-together. Sometime around Christmas gather the extended family together at someone's home or restaurant and hang out with one another
- 2) Watch Christmas movies. Throughout the Christmas season, gather the kids together and enjoy your favorite Christmas movies. Two of my own personal favorites: It's a Wonderful Life and A Christmas Carol.
- 3) Attend a Christmas Eve service. If your church doesn't have a Christmas Eve service, you can probably find one going on somewhere in your community. This is a great way to focus your family's perspective on the true meaning of Christmas!
- 4) Start traditions with Christmas Eve/Christmas Day meals. For example, at the Burns' home, it's always Chinese food on Christmas Eve.
- 5) Letters to Jesus. Before opening your Christmas presents, write thank-you letters to Jesus. Collect them and make them available every Christmas. Keep adding new letters annually. Here's one rule to make this tradition work well: family members can only read the thank-you letters they have written.
- 6) Live out an annual family version of The Twelve Days of Christmas. First identify a friend, relative, or neighbor to receive all of the "gifts." Then, create a unique gift for each day of the song (i.e., five golden rings could be five glazed donuts) and place the gifts on the recipient's front porch.
- 7) Bake and decorate homemade Christmas cookies. Allow everyone in the family to participate if they want. Everyone should be able to request their favorite kind of cookie.
- 8) Sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus on Christmas Day. After all, it is Jesus' birthday that we celebrate.
- 9) Read the Christmas story from Luke 2. Whether you open your gifts on Christmas Eve or Christmas moming, try having someone from your family read the Christmas story out loud before opening gifts.
- 10) Go to the movies on Christmas Day. Gather the troops and head off to the local movie theater. You'll probably get good seats!

- 11) Drive around looking at Christmas lights. Sometime during the Christmas season, load the family up in the car and drive around looking at Christmas lights. This is an activity you might want to combine with attending a Christmas Eve service.
- **12)** Go Christmas caroling. Take a walk around your immediate neighborhood and stop at homes and sing Christmas carols.
- 13) Visit a Nursing Home. There are usually a lot of lonely people living in nursing homes — especially during the Christmas season. Prepare some Christmas cookies and take your family to visit a nursing home—and spread the love of Jesus to sick and elderly people.
- 14) Help at a food bank or soup kitchen. Try spending Christmas day helping the needy at a local food bank or soup kitchen. You never know, your kids may never want to spend Christmas day at home again!
- 15) Celebrate your family's ethnic heritage(s). Sometime during the Christmas season, prepare a family meal(s) that celebrates your family's ethnic heritage. This is a great way to connect with your family roots especially if you don't regularly focus on this throughout the year.
- 16) Secret Santa. As a family, select one person you know who is lonely, needy, or just needs some extra encouragement. Purchase or create a special gift for this person. Then on Christmas Eve/Christmas morning, get the family up out of bed, bundle up, grab some cookies and hot cocoa, pile into the family car, and drive the gift over to the person's home. Sneak the gift onto the front porch and include an attached card that reads. "From your Secret Santa."
- 17) Holiday memory journal or scrapbook. Purchase or make a holiday journal or scrapbook. Have everyone in the family contribute by recording memories of the holiday season. Keep adding to the journal/scrapbook annually. This provides a wonderful way to look back over Christmases gone by.
- 18) Ice skating on Christmas Eve day. Many people get off from work early on Christmas Eve. Gather the family and head out to an ice rink or local (safely frozen!) pond for some time on the ice. It's a great way to spend some family time and it keeps the kids active and helps them not to over-obsess on the presents under the tree back home.
- 19) Attend a local community Christmas event. This tradition can really take hold if the community holds the same event annually.
- 20) Try a New Year's Eve event. Whether it is a neighborhood get-together, a party with friends and family, or a special church event, ringing in the New Year together as a family can create great memories.



Half off Congregation Dies of Starvation As Sermon Goes 15 Minutes Over Time

RUSSELLVILLE, AR—Roughly half of the churchgoers ar First Baptist Church Russellville died of starvation Sunday after the pastor tragically went 15 minutes over his standard sermon time, local sources confirmed

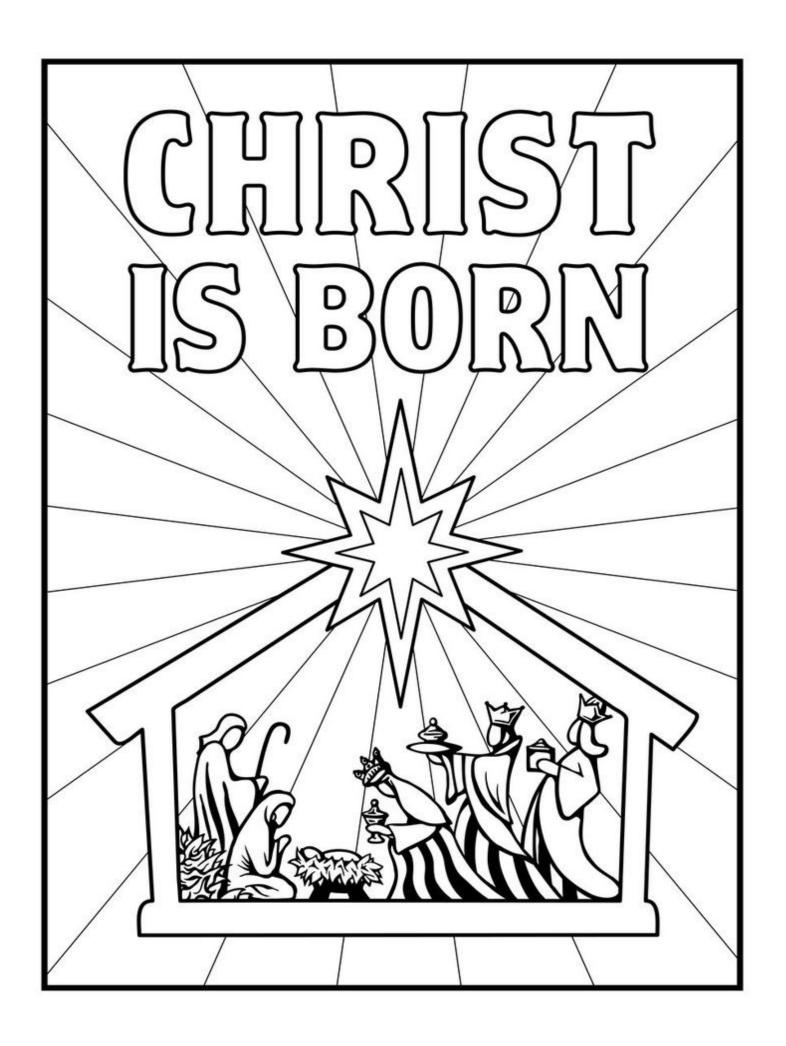
"We don't know if the pastor simply lost track of time due to passion while preaching the word of God, or if something more nefarious was going on," police chief Dwayne Carroll told reporters Monday.

"It's hare to imagine that Pastor Fran did not notice the panicked glances at phones and watches, along with the thunderous stomach growls and moans of agony reverberating through out the sanctuary within minutes after he bagan to breach his normal closing time," the chief continued. "Whatever the case, he went well over his standard allotted time for delivering his message, and roughly 75 people in attendance simply could not hold out, succumbing to their hunger before the end of the church service."

Thankfully, the other half of the congregation was able to make a speedy exit as soon as they were dismissed, frantically rushing our the doors and flooding all local restaurants for emergency sustenance.

"Pastor Frank should have known the dire consequences of a a church service going even a minute past its normal ending time," one survivor noted to reporters. "I mean, people have to eat."

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# The Circuit Writer

January / February 2020

# First United Methodist Church

"Our Mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of

Sunday Services at 9:00 A.M. GenZ Worship 4:00 P.M. Sunday School & Small Groups at 10:30 A.M. Saturday Evenings at 6:00 P.M.

Our Vision: Welcoming, Empowering, Reaching Out
Ministers: Everyone of us:
Pastors and Staff:

Dr. Christopher Fisher Senior Pastor
JoAnn Daum Office Manager
Marcy Hudock Sexton
Adam Kraft Treasurer
Ann Moyer Parish Nurse
Cynthia McClelland Organist/Music Director
Brian Reading Minister of Visitation
Julie Saunders Choir Director
Pamela Setlock Church Secretary