

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
OLIVE CREST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Here in one verse we have all three parts of the Trinity of God! As United Methodists we are Trinitarian in theology, practice, and thought. All three members of the Trinity of God have a role in the ongoing nature of God in how He chooses to reveal Himself to us.

It certainly can be hard to try and explain the three in one construct of our God! I think about it when I read something like Genesis 1:26 that says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, to be like ourselves...'" I suppose it is kind of like talking to yourself, having a me, myself, and I meeting!

We often have some sort of image of our Father God, and an image of what we think Jesus might have looked like but how do we image the Holy Spirit?! How do you imagine the wind, what does it look like to you?! I am thinking about the Holy Spirit because I felt we should spend at least one Sunday acknowledging the Holy Spirit before the season of Pentecost passes. We will look at this the first Sunday in November.

The Holy Spirit is person close to me, I am one who believes the infilling of the Holy Spirit is an important part of our Christian walk. I had another pastor once say we should talk about and appreciate the Holy Spirit because it is the only part of God still here on earth! I thought that made sense anyway. The gifts of the Holy Spirit often stir up a lot of misconceptions and that is a shame. It is their use, not the gifts themselves that sometimes get off track. The Bible also talks of the fruit of the Spirit, wonderful facets of human activity and they are vital if we are to witness appropriately to a hurting world.

My prayer is that you are and/or will become comfortable with the Comforter! Our power and authority is supported by the Spirit's indwelling within us and He will impart the very wisdom of the Father! Don't get misguided by someone's opinion, just grab hold and do what the Bible teaches us to do. The Spirit of Truth IS the truth!!!



*"But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative - and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit - he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you."*  
John 14:26 NLT



Thanks for the emails and cards I received during October which was pastor appreciation month. They were very much appreciated. Marcus and Tami, thanks for allowing us to be a part of renewing your wedding vows. That is a special event and I hope more people think about doing that regardless of the anniversary number!



## **Letters from Lily**

**United Methodist Global Mission Fellow  
in Portrush Northern Ireland**

And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'  
**Acts 22: 7-8**

Along with her work with the Surf Project, Lily also writes devotionals for the local Methodist Churches on the North Coast of Northern Ireland.

This devotional is the 2nd of a 3 part series on Paul.

### **Read: Acts 22:12-16**

**Ananias is one of the most important people in the Bible, despite the fact that he is only mentioned twice in the whole bible. I know that is bold claim, but without him, Paul probably never would have become a Christian and journeyed all over the Greco-Roman world spreading the Gospel. Paul's encounter with Christ on the road would have not changed much if he hadn't then met Ananias. Ananias didn't want to go meet Saul, he knew who Saul was and what he was coming to Damascus to do. Ananias would probably have been killed if Saul had carried out his original mission. But Ananias was obedient and went to Paul and helped him make sense of what happened on the road. The miracle of Christ appearing to Saul is amazing, extraordinary but Jesus' miracles always have a second component beyond the initial healing or bright moment, He also always restores them to community. Even for Paul He sends Ananias to help introduce Paul to the early church community. Jesus doesn't just perform a miracle and then walk away, He stays in their lives, in spirit, through other people, and because He continues a relationship with us.**

**I believe in an active God, who is always pursuing us and loving us, sometimes He uses us and other people to impact other's lives. You may not realize that God is working through you, just like He worked through Ananias with Paul. God doesn't always use big shining bolts of light He also connects with us through ordinary people. God works through us all the time; we may not even realize it. You never know how God might work through you to encourage someone, or to speak light into their lives. We need to be open and paying attention to how God might be nudging us and obedient like Ananias because without ordinary people like you and me being Christ's church then we become the barriers to God's Kingdom here on earth. It seems extreme but if we aren't living in the Spirit and following His lead, we might miss what God is doing all around us. So, I encourage you to be like Ananias, because who know you might just encourage someone as influential as Paul.**

### **Prayer:**

**Dear Heavenly Father thank you for sending people into our lives to do your work. You are an amazing God who wants a relationship with us and wants us to live in community with each other. Thank you God, for sending Your spirit to work in us to bring Your Kingdom here. You have entrusted us to be Your church Lord, give us the strength to follow where you lead. In your name we pray. Amen.**

## Fridge Friendly INFO

# CALENDAR

**Worship Service has returned to the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Mask required, every other pew and 6 ft social distancing guidelines in place.**

**\*Worship Service Sundays at 10:00 am**

Sanctuary and on Facebook Live

**\*Karen Baptist Church at 1:00 pm**

**\*Trustee and CARE Team Meeting** 11/3 at 6 pm

**\*Election Day** 11/3 All Day Fellowship Hall

**\*Fall Clean-up** 11/7 from 8-12 pm

**\*Simon Says Mission @ Completely KIDS** 11/9 at 5:30 pm

**\*Leadership Meeting** 11/12 at 1 pm (Lounge)

**\*Simon Says Mission @ Ronald McDonald House** 11/24 at 5:30 pm

**\*God's Closet and More** open on 11/14 & 11/28 from 9-12

COVID-19 restrictions in place

**\*Hanging of the Greens** 11/28 from 2-6pm

**\*1st Sunday of Advent** 11/29

**Office Hours:  
Tuesdays from 1-4  
Thursdays 10-4**

**Contact Information:**

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**Newsletter / calendar submissions due by 3rd Friday of each month.**

## Christmas Is Just Around The Corner!!!

Before we know it the Advent season and Christmas will be close at hand. This year we are adding a very special way to celebrate the "Reason for the Season", the birth of our Lord Jesus. We will have our Christmas tree set up for pinning on mittens and gloves as has been done in the past, but under the tree! – We are having a "Christmas Shower" for Assure Women's Center here in Omaha! There are a number of items they need as they minister to families from diapers to bottles to baby clothes, we have provided a list to help with your shopping. Perhaps you are more familiar with the old title, Crisis Pregnancy Center but they have used the Assure name for several years now. They do a tremendous ministry providing counseling, ultrasounds, parenting classes. They visit schools to reach out to our young people. They also have a boutique that "moms to be" can shop at to meet the needs of a baby on the way. By keeping doctor appointments, attending counseling and parenting classes, they acquire "points" that they use to shop with. Assure is so well thought of it has become a model that pregnancy centers have come to from across the nation to receive training and model after. We wanted to get the word out now, not because we are forgetting Thanksgiving but if you are like us at our house we want to do some special giving for this and will spread it out over November and December. Special is a key word indeed for this, what a wonderful way to generate life in the church by supporting life! For anyone who would like, go ahead and send gifts the next two months and we will gladly shop for you and/or bring your shower gifts to church! There is also a way to "adopt" families and help provide Christmas to those who otherwise would not have one! Let us know if you would like to do this or have any questions! Assure will be coming to church shortly after Christmas to share with us about their work and we look forward to that as well. Thank You, Parson Randy

### Most needed items:

Swings  
Car Seat Covers  
Backpack Diaper Bags  
Pants- (low on 12-2T)  
Outfits – (low on sizes 18M-2T)  
Sleepers – (Low on 12M-2T)  
Bottles  
High chairs  
Baby Monitors  
Burp Cloths  
Wash Cloths / Towels  
Bouncers  
Bibs  
Diaper Pail  
Underwear (2T/3T)  
Convertible Style Car Seats  
Toys -for 2 Year olds

### Other items needed:

Pull-Ups (2T/3T)  
Diapers- Disposable  
Wipes  
Booties/Shoes/Socks  
Safety items –  
plug covers, baby gates, etc  
Pacifiers  
Digital Thermometers  
Winter Coats/Mittens/etc  
Heavy/Receiving Blankets  
Crib Sheets  
Teething  
Toddler Utensils/Cups  
Exersaucers  
Baby Care Items: Lotion, Shampoo,  
Powder, Vaseline,  
Diaper Rash Cream, Baby Oil



No Cost, Professional  
Women's Center in  
Omaha, Nebraska and  
Council Bluffs, Iowa

*...you are beautiful  
and stronger than  
you know.*

Thank you for your support of Moms and Babies!!,

These above items are made available to our moms (& dads) who attend our Parenting Classes. They come and learn about parenting and also "purchase" items needed for their babies with the points they earn. For questions, email [leanna@assureomaha.com](mailto:leanna@assureomaha.com).



*Gratitude Scavenger Hunt* Slow down for a while and think about what you are grateful for. Teach the kids in your life to do this too. You can use those magazines that are piling up or take pictures and make a collage – it will be a great visual reminder of all that is good in your life! OR Simply write on the space below!

- ☐ *Something you have learned .....*
- ☐ *Some place that you have visited .....*
- ☐ *Something in the outdoors .....*
- ☐ *An amazing smell .....*
- ☐ *An older person that you are grateful for.....*
- ☐ *A special sound .....*
- ☐ *A food that tastes delicious .....*
- ☐ *A younger person that you are grateful for.....*
- ☐ *Something/Someone that makes you laugh .....*
- ☐ *A special memory.....*
- ☐ *An accomplishment.....*
- ☐ *Something in your neighborhood/town.....*
- ☐ *Something at school/work.....*
- ☐ *Something that keeps you healthy.....*
- ☐ *Something about the holidays.....*



**Are you looking for a simple way to invite Christ into your Christmas?  
Enjoy this Advent devotional by Joe Lovino.  
There is a reading for each Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day.**

## **'Making Room for Christmas'**



### **Nov. 29th Making Room for OTHERS**

**The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world didn't recognize the light. The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him. But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children. – John 1:10-12 CEB**

Christmas is a time of welcome! The Christmas celebration Las Posadas comes from the Hispanic traditions of Latin American countries, especially Mexico. It dates back to the 16th century. Every evening from December 16-23, with a special service on Christmas Eve, those celebrating Las Posadas travel together to a predetermined place where they knock on the door of a darkened home to begin a liturgy. The community gathered outside asks for lodging in the voice of Joseph. "We have come exhausted from Nazareth," The people inside give a rational response, "We do not give lodging to strangers." Readings from Scripture follow until the people inside the home turn on the lights and invite the travelers to come inside. "Lodging we will give you with much happiness," they say, "enter, good Joseph; enter with Mary." When everyone is inside, it is time to celebrate!

Making room for Jesus includes making room for our neighbors. Jesus taught that what we do for others, we also do for him. What rituals will you go through to prepare for Christmas? How will you make room in your life in the days ahead? How will you reach out in love and service to your neighbors around the corner and around with world? How will you make room for others this Christmas?

Prayer: O God, open my eyes to see those with whom I can share your love this week. Amen.

## **Dec. 6th Making Room for HOPE**

**Mary said, “With all my heart I glorify the Lord! ...He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.” — Luke 1:46, 51-53 CEB**

At Christmas, we can lose focus on what is most important, thinking more about what we want than what we already have in Christ. In the United States this year, Amazon.com released its first-ever, print, toy catalog for Christmas. It even included stickers to help family members highlight the items they most want this year. We sometimes come to Christmas from a place of lack. We ask our kids what they want for Christmas and make wish lists of our own. We worry about having enough money to get everyone the gifts we’ve imagined they so desperately want.

We do all of this in celebration of the birth of Jesus, who had nearly nothing — not even a proper place to be born. Yet we proclaim this child to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Clearly there is more to Christmas than the gifts we exchange. It is the gift we receive in Christ. The baby with “nothing” is the hope for the world. What do you want for Christmas? Where do you sense lack? How will you refocus your attention on the hope found in Jesus Christ? How will you make room for hope this Christmas?

Prayer: O God, refocus me on the hope I already have in Christ. Amen.

## **Dec. 13th Making Room for Peace**

**Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you — wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. — Luke 2:8-11 CEB**

Christmas is busy! Even in the midst of a pandemic there is so much to do! The decorating needs to be done. Some of us will still prepare for the arrival of guests with deep cleaning. Shopping and baking will still happen. We wonder every year how we’re going to fit it all in and this year, how to do it in a new way. But it’s not this way only at Christmas time. Some of us live similarly the other 11 months of the year also. We expend so much energy going from here to there, accomplishing to-do list item A through to-do list item Z with little room to pause and ponder.

Maybe that’s one of the reasons the shepherds were the first to hear about the birth of Jesus. They were “living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night.” It must have been quieter with their flocks than it was with the crowds in town who’d arrived for the census.

In the midst of our busyness at Christmas and other times throughout the year, we need to take time for wonder, awe and peace. Have you been busy as you prepare for Christmas? How will you take time to go out to the fields and look up into the sky? How will you pause, process and give thanks for all that God is doing in and for you? How will you make room for peace this Christmas?

Prayer: O God, slow me down so that I might experience the wonder, awe and peace of Christmas. Amen.

## **Dec. 20th Making Room for Joy**

**Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. — Luke 2:4-5 CEB**

As Mary and Joseph traveled to his hometown, many of us go home for Christmas as well. We journey near and far to gather with family and friends, some of whom we may not see at any other time of year. For infrequent travelers, the idea of getting on an airplane or packing the car can seem overwhelming. Where is that suitcase? Is this too big to be a carry-on? Do we have everything the kids will need? How will we travel with the gifts we'll give and later return with the ones we'll receive? Many will over pack, only to realize later we didn't need to take everything with us. And this year, is it even safe for us to travel! Are we putting our family at risk.

In our everyday lives, we can also carry a lot of negative, emotional "baggage." Anger about that event long ago still travels with us. Hurt from a difficult relationship seems always nearby. Internal struggles about money, time, and other resources are held onto. We need to pack lighter. When we carry too much, we hinder our ability to receive.

Our hands must be empty to embrace the joy of Christ, to receive the love from our neighbors, friends and family. Do you tend to over pack? What might you leave behind? What good things have you missed because you were clutching onto something else? What negativity do you need to release? How will you make room for joy this Christmas?

Prayer: O God, grant me the strength and courage to carry less "baggage" this Christmas.

## **Dec. 25th Making Room for LOVE**

**A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God! Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the Lord's mouth has commanded it." —Isaiah 40:3-5, CEB**

While preparing for Christmas, many of us move things around to make room. The furniture is rearranged to make a place for the Christmas tree. Knick-knacks on a hearth or living room table are cleared to accommodate the Nativity set. Wall hangings are shuffled to provide a spot to display the Christmas cards we receive. The contents of the pantry, refrigerator and freezer are consolidated so there will be room for ingredients and special Christmas food. We clean out the extra bedroom to offer our guests. We may even prune some trees in the yard and clean the gutters to make space for Christmas decorations.

Advent is a time when we are comfortable moving things around to make room in our homes for Christmas. This makes sense. Christmas is about the birth of a child, and every parent knows what it is like to lovingly prepare their homes for the day the child arrives and changes their lives.

How will things be moved around in your home this Christmas? What needs to be rearranged in your life to make room for the Christ child? What changes will you make to carry Christ with you every day? How will you make room for love this Christmas?

Prayer: O God, show me how I can share the hope, peace, joy and love of Christmas with others. Amen.