

Church News ~ December 2021

St. Paul's UMC ~ Republic Trinity ~ Melmore UMC ~ Sycamore UMC ~ Union Salem UMC

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Advent is known as the season of waiting...waiting for the Christ child. There are times that it hardly feels like a time of waiting. We pack so many holiday activities between Thanksgiving and Christmas! We run from place to place, event to event, it hardly seems as if we are waiting for anything!

How can we proceed with caution this Advent? How can we slow down and use this season of waiting as a time of preparation for Jesus' coming? Could you build something into your schedule that allows you to have a few moments of down time to consider the coming Christ? After all, aren't we in a time of waiting anyway? We are waiting for Jesus to come again! We often forget that we are waiting for Him to come again.

I read this in Guideposts and thought I would share it with you:

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar with wings like eagles; They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Do you remember when you were a child how unbearable the long wait before Christmas was? Being wild with anticipation for the boundless goodies and toys were just days away? Going to sleep on Christmas Eve was near impossible. I could hardly wait!

I am still not great at waiting. There has been a lot of waiting in my life. Waiting to get married. Waiting for my babies to be born. Waiting to be published. Then there are all the mundane hours of waiting. Like waiting for laundry to get done or for kids to finish going to the bathroom. You will not

believe how much time I have spent knocking on bathroom doors asking, "Are you done in there, for goodness's sake?" So much waiting.

In Isaiah 40:31, it says, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." In other translations it says, "Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength." Hope and waiting seem like opposites. Hope seems so positive and uplifting and waiting seems horrible and angst ridden.

But hope and waiting go hand in hand. We can wait because we have hope. We wait on Jesus' timing because our hope is in Him and Him alone. It is the very essence of Christmas. All that waiting for the Messiah. All that hoping. And then there it was. Christmas. God with us.

I will never like waiting. Yet I am filled with hope for all that tomorrow holds. Prayers answered, friendships relished and miracles arriving. Like the One that arrived so long ago. A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. Hope revealed. He was worth the wait.

Faith step: Write down three things that you are waiting for right now and remind yourself that there is hope in the waiting.

May you be blessed in the waiting,

Pastor Charlene



Merry Christmas

Two by Two-Not Reinventing the Wheel

Sometimes, it really pays off to be Better Together. After all, if someone has already created something or done something, it only makes sense to take advantage of their previous experience.

This works in many *many* ways in our connection. One way this works is that Pastor Charlene and I try to take the load off of each other every once in a while. So, this fall when we were buried under mountains of charge conference paperwork, I wrote part of the combined pastor's report for all five of our churches and Charlene wrote the other part of it. This saved us both time and allowed us to spend more time working on other items--other than paperwork.

But there are many other ways this happens in our connection. For example, this summer, the praise band from St. Paul's came (with their sound equipment in tow) to play at Melmore UMC for our combined Father's Day service. This fall, folks from St. Paul's, Sycamore, and Trinity in Republic, and beyond, have come to and presented at our Friday Fun Days at Melmore UMC. When we started Joyful Contagions and #Hislightstillshines during the beginning of the pandemic, people from all three churches in the connection helped to figure out what we wanted to do and just how we were going to execute it.

Speaking of the pandemic, whenever one of us needed a day off—we shared digital services—and not just between Charlene and I—we shared with several other pastors from across the district and the conference so that they would be able to take a Sunday off from digital production. We have shared VBS materials and volunteers, combined forces to collect money and items for missions, and pulled together pastors and people for combined worship.

We have learned together. When one of us learns a new technology, we share that knowledge. When one of us finds a way to manage resources more wisely, we share that. When one of our churches is blessed with a donation of food or paper products that it cannot use, we find another church that can. When we have extra kids' resources, or adult study materials, or worship materials than we can use; we spread that love to our other churches.

We share contacts and tips and information, websites, books and pamphlets. We connect each

other to resources like charitable institutions and service people who can help our parishioners and our churches thrive.

And whenever we do that, whenever we share our gifts with each other, we allow our churches and our ministries to do more. Because truthfully, what is written here is just the tip of the iceberg. We have gotten so used to sharing in ministry and finding ways to access and reuse resources, that it comes so naturally that we don't even give it a second thought.

So, in this month when we count our blessings, let us count the blessing of being connected in such a way that we don't have to give finding ways to help each other a second thought. Because a world in which we can do that, is a far easier world to navigate and a world in which we can create stronger and better churches and communities—together.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WORSHIP IN THE NORTHERN CIRCUIT

In the Northern circuit, we will begin our Advent series by reading and preaching about the book "The Heart that Grew Three Sizes", learning lessons about Christmas through the Grinch's story. How did Christmas save the Grinch? How did his heart grow three sizes? Could we find faith in the story of the Grinch? Come and worship with us on Sunday mornings as we explore these ideas. Let's look a Christmas through the grumpy eyes of the Grinch!



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WORSHIP IN THE SOUTHERN CIRCUIT

As I write this, Advent is rapidly approaching and will no doubt be upon us by the time the newsletter reaches everyone. After all, Advent creeps up on us and surprises us all early this year, on November 28th, a blessing, after these last two years of trials, that allow us to take just a little more time to enjoy the Christmas season. As

we worship through this season of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace; we will look at the Christmas Season through the lens of the Grinch as we partner our worship services with the Combined Bible Study as they read through *The Heart that Grew Three Sizes*. On Christmas Eve, we will join for a combined traditional service at Sycamore UMC at 6:00 pm. Plus, we will be doing something new this year with a combined service with some fun surprises for kids and families (and the young at heart) at Melmore UMC at 8:00 pm. So, since we have been blessed with the extra time in Advent this year, let's work to pack it with a little *more*: a little more Hope, a little more Love, a little more Peace, and a little more Joy Joy Joy Joy down in our hearts while take time to remember the greatest gift that this world has ever received: Jesus.



Greetings from St. Paul's Missions Committee:

The Sharing Kitchen mission was completed at the end of October. A picture of the table with the donated items is included with this article. The support for this project from our Church community was fantastic. What was even more awesome was receiving a call from Tiffin's Masonic DeMolay indicating that they wanted to assist us in this project. This local DeMolay has 12 young men who are mentored by Ben Lindhorst, and currently led by Carter Lindhorst. They collected \$270 which they presented to Marilou Hill (a Sharing Kitchen volunteer) for the purchase of gifts for the Sharing Kitchen Christmas Party. As Marilou explained, many of their clients are adults who live alone and have limited means, so this Christmas celebration is very important to them. I recently attended a presentation at Melmore's UMC where the topic was "What Gives You Hope". When I witnessed this random act of kindness by these young men, I knew this is what gives me hope. A picture is included with this article showing Ben Lindhorst, Carter and AJ Lindhorst, and Aiden Aldrich from the DeMolay presenting the check to Marilou during a church service.

Operation Christmas Child (the Shoebox Mission) was just completed. We turned in 16 shoeboxes. They will now be transported to one of the processing centers around the United States, then grouped according to requests of pastors from around the world. A New Testament and teaching materials in the language of the prospective recipients will be added and then they will be shipped, flown, or trucked to their destination. During this past year's lockdowns, it looked like our boxes were not going to be delivered in Thailand. People prayed for their doors to be opened and somehow, they did. 8,000 children received boxes and began their journey to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. Last year was the first-time boxes were delivered to the island of Palau. Shoeboxes are now distributed on over 200 Pacific islands. The list of impact stories could go on and on.

We are now starting our Angel Tree Mission. We do this in coordination with the Salvation Army. We are collecting children's clothing up to size 3x for their Christmas Party. The price limit is \$20. The item should not be wrapped and can be placed under the tree or left in the office. The items should be turned in no later than December 13.

The special envelope for Thanksgiving will be sent to FACT and the special envelope for Christmas will be sent to First Call for Help Heating Fund.

The Mission's Committee is going to initiate a new mission in January. We will be collecting snack items for the kids in the Budding Genius/Noble After School program. Molly Lofton works in this program. These kids are 4th and 5th graders and 85% are from economically disadvantaged homes. They are in the program because they need help in reading and/or math. They meet after school for 2 1/2 hrs. The program runs into June. Their programs are individualized to meet their needs. There is federal funding for the program but not to be used for food. Tiffin City Schools provides some help, but this is limited. We will be posting a list of desired items and setting up a tote which will be in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays and in the office during the week. If you desire more information about this program, I will forward Molly's email to you which was very lengthy but full of details.

As always Church, thank you for your support of our missions.

~ Denise Lawson, St. Paul's Mission Committee



Bible Study

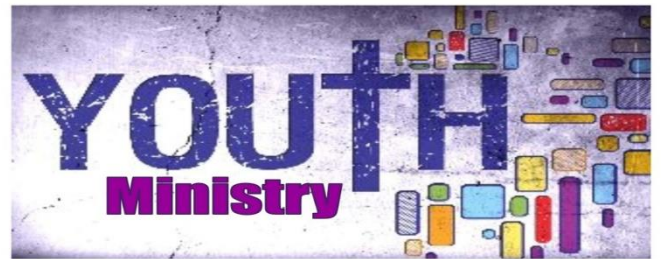
Have you been wondering what the Bible study is going to be up to in the next coming months? This month, we will be looking at *The Heart that Grew Three Sizes* in December (see Charlene's article for more details). In January, we will be reading *The Case for Christ*, a powerful and thought-provoking true story of a journalist looking for evidence that Christ really was the son of God by Lee Strobel. Once we finish the book, we will be getting together to watch the movie version (more details to come later). And in February, we will be reading *Revival* by Adam Hamilton, a book that explores the life of John Wesley and what it truly means to be a Wesleyan Christian.

If you would like to join us for any of these book studies, contact Pastor Charlene for the Tuesday night St. Paul's study at 6:30 pm or Pastor Amy for the Wednesday morning Sycamore study at 10:30 am.



Christmas in the Village

Looking for something to get you in the Christmas Spirit? Christmas in the Village is coming up on December 11th in Sycamore. This is a daylong event spearheaded by the Mohawk Community Service Club. The day will kick off with a pancake and egg breakfast from 8:00-10:00 am at the Sycamore UMC followed by a parade at 5:00 pm. From 5:30-7:30, there will be Christmas events all over downtown Sycamore including horse & carriage rides to see the lights, strolling carolers, a live nativity, activities for kids, and a Happy Birthday Jesus party including hot chocolate and birthday cupcakes at Sycamore UMC. Don't miss it!



Kids Programming Continues & Begins

Kids for Christ/Teen Talk and Junior Youth have rebooted this fall and have continued their programming. In Melmore (Kids for Christ/Teen Talk) the children have been learning about the life of Jesus, singing some great music, and had a wonderful time at Trunk or Treat. At Union-Salem (Junior Youth), the kids have been learning about the life of David and energetically singing some of their favorite songs this evening. Meanwhile, Sycamore has begun to host monthly events for kids, starting in October with Fall Fest, followed by a Harvest Party and a movie night in November. Stay tuned for more updates and if you know kids who could benefit from any of our programs, let us

know and we will help to get them connected. Thank you for all you do to support spreading the gospel to our children.



St. Paul's Youth Fellowship

This month we will be having each youth from Youth Fellowship adopt a senior at the church. Also, on January 8th we are looking at attending Winter Jam in Columbus if weather is permitting for the trip. The poster for this event is posted on the youth bulletin board located just outside the kitchen door on the lower level and if you have any questions, please contact me.

Due to the youth being in lots of sporting events, the Youth Fellowship is now meeting every other Saturday from 1:00-2:30 p.m. beginning November 27th. Any Youth can attend Youth Fellowship from 6th grade and up.

Thanks to everyone for supporting our youth.
~ *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*
Tevin Drosky, Youth Fellowship Leader

children's program



St. Paul's Children's Christmas Program Sunday, December 19th during worship service

A group of students are preparing for Christmas - decorating the tree, wrapping presents, and singing carols. Mary, Joseph, and the Angel will all make an appearance at the play. The children tell in poems how each of these things are for Jesus, as they prepare for a Birthday party for Jesus!

Practice's will be held on Sunday, December 12th immediately following worship, and on Wednesday, December 15th at 6 pm with pizza being served followed by play practice and costume fitting. Please contact Molly Lofton at 419-618-1177 with any questions.

Calling All Kids-Christmas Program

Are you a kid or a kid at heart? Do you love Christmas or are you a Grinch? Are you looking for some Joy Joy Joy Joy Down in Your Heart? If so,



join us on Christmas Eve at 8 pm at Melmore UMC. If you know any kids who would like to help with music for the service, please contact Pastors Amy and Charlene.



Happy Birthday Jesus Party at St. Paul's Saturday, December 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Crafts, Bingo, Christmas Story, Cupcakes and Pinata. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Any questions, please contact Melody Woessner.

Friday Fun Days-Melmore

Friday Fun Days at Melmore UMC are becoming the place to be! Our group has been growing steadily as we continue to learn new ideas from local presenters and enjoy a good meal together. November's program featured Lori Arnold, Ph.D., author, musician, and puppeteer. We had a great group gathered to listen to her message of hope and even enjoyed some laughter as Ernie joined in and shared some of his best jokes about fall. We have some wonderful upcoming programs and would love for you to join us. If you have any ideas for future programs, be sure to let Pastor Amy know.

December 10: local historian, Kim Mohr, presents a historical picture program on Melmore

January 14: local artist, John Cochran, presents a program on his stained-glass artistry

February 11: master gardener, Jean Preston, shares her knowledge and love of butterflies and how we can help them thrive

Election Night Supper/Bean Soup Sale-Sycamore

Thank you to everyone who came out and supported our Election Night Supper and our Bean Soup Sales this month! We have enjoyed seeing so many faces and being able to catch up with old

friends and make new acquaintances. Many folks from our larger church connection and community have showed up and it has been wonderful to get to know them better. Thank you again!



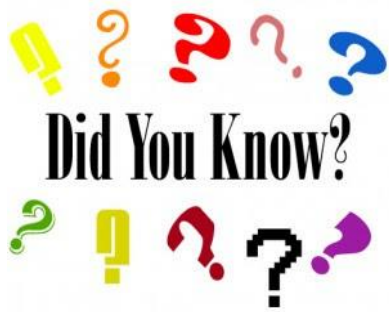
Fall Fest

Thank you to everyone who attended the Fall Fest at Melmore UMC. We enjoyed spending time with folks from our community and our greater church connection as we ate some delicious food and shared some of our favorite hymns together while the kids' enjoyed games and face-painting. It was wonderful to be able to make deeper connections with everyone!

Ham Loaves & Sauerkraut Balls

Thank you to everyone who purchased ham loaves and sauerkraut balls this year. We had another record-setting year in sales, and we had a great time making them for everyone. Thanks, as well, to everyone who pitched in, rolled up their sleeves, and mixed and rolled and fried and baked and basted and stirred and packaged until the job was done.





Pill Bottle Collection & Canola Oil-What You Need to Know

Ever get frustrated by those sticky labels on your prescription bottles when you are prepping them to donate? Wonder if there is a better way? Well, wonder no more! One of our connectional members has been working hard on a solution and has come up with a good method. He runs water through his coffee maker, fills the vials with hot water and lets them set for a minute or two to loosen the glue on the label. Then he peels off the label and rubs the sticky area left behind with canola oil which helps remove the sticky stuff and then washes them off with sudsy water. Voila! Clean bottles.



Bible Quiz

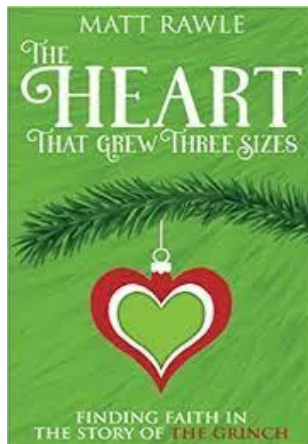
Bible Quiz Season has kicked off with a vengeance! This year the kids are quizzing on the Book of John and there are two St. Paul's youth, Enola and Elijah Ramirez coached by Carol Taylor of Melmore UMC quizzing, as well as Noah and Luke McDaniel from Union-Salem UMC who are quizzing with Evangelical Faith Fellowship's team. If you haven't had an opportunity to watch Bible Quiz in action, it is a must see! The next quiz is on December 5th at 2:30 at Melmore UMC. Come on out and support all of the quizzers!





Christmas is the time for giving, and I am asking you to please remember your church in tithing, prayers and service now and all year. Giving to the church is so important for not only paying our monthly bills, but to continue to serve our members and our community. This can't be done with your giving. Please prayerfully consider your annual giving. Merry Christmas and let's make it a Happy New Year!

~ Molly Lofton, Finance Chairperson St. Paul's



Five Church Advent Study

We don't know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know that he did. In this study, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in the Christmas classic, How the Grinch Stole Christmas!

Learn how the Grinch's heart grew three sizes that Christmas morning! Learn how Christmas saved the Grinch! Could the thing that he hated actually save him?

Join us for this study on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul's or on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. at Sycamore UMC.

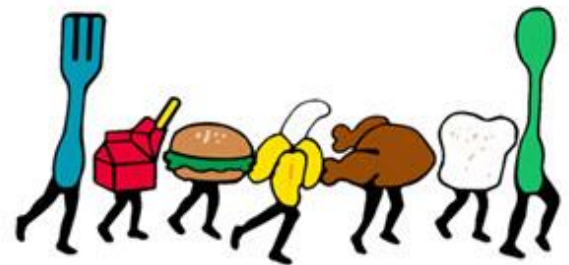
Thank you

St. Paul's family,

Thank you all for your prayers of love and support. This journey won't be easy but with all of you behind me and God as my #1, I know I can do this.

Thank you for the food for our family. What a load off to not have to worry about feeding the team!

Love you all, ~ Heidi Ramirez



THE LUNCH BUNCH

Join us for Lunch Bunch on Tuesday,
December 28th 12:00 noon
at St. Paul's UMC
cost \$10 per person

Hot Lunch Boxes that include:

BBQ Pork Sandwich

Shredded Chicken Sandwich

Baked Beans, Bacon-Cheese Scalloped Potatoes
Condiments, service wear, cookie, and beverage

EVERYONE invited (youth included)
Please RSVP to St. Paul's Church office
(419) 447-1743
by December 17th.

Calendar of Events-Southern Circuit

- 12/01-10:30 am-Combined Bible Study
@ Sycamore UMC
12/01-5:45-7:00 pm-KFC/Teen Talk
@ Melmore UMC
12/05-9:00 am-Communion Sunday
@ Union-Salem UMC
12/05-10:00 am-Communion Sunday
@ Sycamore UMC
12/05-11:00 am-Communion Sunday
@ Melmore UMC
12/05-2:30 pm-Bible Quiz @ Melmore UMC
12/7-7:30 pm-One Board Meeting
@ Melmore UMC
12/8-10:30 am-Combined Bible Study
@ Sycamore UMC
12/8-5:45-7:00 pm-KFC/Teen Talk
@ Melmore UMC
12/10-10:00 am-Friday Fun Day-Melmore
Historical Picture Program w/ Kim Mohr presenting
@ Melmore UMC
12/11-8:00-10:00 am-Christmas in the Village-
Pancake and Egg Breakfast @ Sycamore UMC
12/11-5:30-7:30 pm-Christmas in the Village-
Happy Birthday Jesus Party w/ cupcakes and hot
chocolate @ Sycamore UMC
12/12-Time and locations TBD-Caroling
w/ Union-Salem UMC
12/14-5:30-7:00 pm-Junior Youth
@ Union-Salem UMC
12/15-10:30 am-Combined Bible Study
@ Sycamore UMC
12/15-5:45-7:00 pm-KFC/Teen Talk Christmas
Party @ Melmore UMC
12/20-7:00 pm-One Board Meeting
@ Sycamore UMC
12/21-5:00-6:30 pm-Happy Birthday Jesus! Party
@ Union-Salem UMC
12/22-10:30 am-Combined Bible Study
@ Sycamore UMC
12/24-6:00 pm-Combined Christmas Eve Service
@ Sycamore UMC
12/24-8:00 pm-Combined Christmas Eve Service
@ Melmore UMC
12/29-No Combined Bible Study
@ Sycamore UMC

December Celebrations

Birthdays

- 3 – Devon Buckley, Jr.-Melmore
3 -- Hayley Luhring-Melmore
5 – Josh Roberts -Melmore
6 – Roger Luhring-Melmore
6 – Norina Martin – St. Paul’s
7 – Travis Kovach-Melmore
7 -- Sharon Weaver-Melmore
9 – Blanche Hurley-Melmore
10 – Katie Weaver-Melmore
11 – Karla Siegle-Melmore
12 – John Scott Brookes-Melmore
12 -- Hannah Watson-Melmore
13 – Faye Eley – St. Paul’s
14 – A.J. Lindhorst – St. Paul’s
15 -- Carol McDannell-Melmore
15 – Misty Morano-Melmore
16 – Derek Weaver-Melmore
18 -- Jace McDannell-Melmore
18 – Micah Rettig-Melmore
19 – Eric Roush-Melmore
20 – Michael Luhring-Melmore
22 – Erika (Distel) Burks-Melmore
23 – Cameron Nye-Melmore
24 – Nathan Weaver-Melmore
24 -- Terry Bell-Union-Salem
25 – Robert Gabel-Melmore
25 -- Craig Riedel-Union-Salem
26 – David McQuiston-Melmore
27 - Nico Vittorio-Melmore
29 – Cindy Brookes-Melmore
29 -- Bill “BJ” Nye, Jr.-Melmore
29 -- Becki Reis-Melmore
30 – Matt Drosky – St. Paul’s

Anniversaries

- 9 - Craig & Kim McDaniel-Union-Salem
11 - David & Pastor Charlene Thomas-
St. Paul’s
21 - Caleb & Kara Orians-Union-Salem
22 - Kevin & Liz Steen-Union-Salem
26 – Devon & Angela Buckley-Melmore
27 – Dick & Linda Benfer-Melmore
27 -- Craig & Pat Riedel-Union-Salem

Calendar Legend:

The monthly calendars can be quite full, so to help be sure that all church events fit on the appropriate dates, I will be using abbreviations for the churches as follows: **ME** = Melmore, **RE** = Republic, **SP** = St. Paul’s, **SY** = Sycamore, **US** = Union Salem ~ *Joyce Randell, Editor St. Paul’s*

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS IN OUR PARISH

Date	Event	Time	Place
Sunday, December 5 th	The Flame Worship Service	6:30 p.m.	Republic Trinity UMC
Saturday, December 11 th	Happy Birthday Jesus Party	10:00 a.m.	St. Paul's UMC
Saturday, December 11 th	Happy Birthday Jesus Party	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Sycamore UMC
Sunday, December 19 th	St. Paul's Children's Christmas Program	10:15 a.m.	St. Paul's UMC
Sunday, December 19 th	Trinity Children's Pajama Worship	6:30 p.m.	Republic Trinity UMC
Friday, December 24 th	Christmas Eve Worship	6:30 p.m.	St. Paul's UMC
	Children/Family Christmas Eve Worship	8:00 p.m.	Melmore UMC
	Christmas Eve Worship	6:00 p.m.	Sycamore UMC

ST. PAUL'S 2022 STEWARDSHIP

Commitment cards have been mailed out and we have had an opportunity to return them. If you have not returned your commitment card yet, please consider doing so. These cards give us vital information on what ministries you feel called by God to support at St. Paul's.

Commitment cards are not only about your financial commitment. The Commitment cards include much more information than your financial support commitment. The commitment cards serve as a way for us to fulfill the call to discipleship that is on our lives.

We are approaching the six-month mark of our time together...wow! It seems like much has happened in six months. But we are always aware of the fact that our God can change the world in three days, so imagine the work God oversees in six months.

We, as your pastors, are reminded every day of how much you all love God and are committed to completing the work that Jesus left for us. We have seen it in your willingness to re-imagine ministries, to reinvigorate worship by incorporating new ideas and we see it in your excitement to contemplate new ways that we can reach into our communities with the gospel message.

Thank you for your patience and your grace with us and with one another as we have grown in new and exciting ways. The season of Advent and the coming of Christmas remind us of the transformative and unexpected ways that God has always moved in creation. I know that giving birth to Jesus was not how Mary envisioned her first child coming! How many times has God called us to the unexpected?! More times than we can count. But God is always faithful to see the plan through to fruition and God will make good come of all things as long as we continue to be called into God's purpose.

This Christmas, we invite you to set aside your own expectations of what the holiday will look like and lean into the unexpected mystery of a life of faith. We don't know what God has planned for us, but we know that God does have a plan and God's plan is for us to have hope! We cling to that hope each day.

*~ Merry Christmas,
Pastor Charlene & Pastor Amy*

