



# Mount Gretna UMC

## Happenings

November 2021

Dear Friends,

*"Gratitude goes beyond the 'mine' and the 'thine' and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy."— Henri Nouwen*

November is a month when we take the time to notice and celebrate gratitude. Although there has been a long history of celebrating a festival of Thanksgiving in the month of November, it wasn't until 1863, during the middle of the Civil War, that Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national holiday of Thanksgiving.

We often mark our thanksgiving by what we have, and by the things in our lives for which we are grateful. We might consider ourselves blessed that we have loving family, or plenty of food, clean water, so many things that we know we often take for granted that others around the world often live without.

But while it is important to recognize the good things in our lives and to remember our sisters and brothers who might not have those things, is this gratitude of comparison really the heart of blessing or thanksgiving?

The bold beginning of Thanksgiving as a national holiday during the Civil War reminds us that we can live gratitude even in the midst of difficulty, that we can find blessing even in the midst of pain. Perhaps our blessings have less to do with the list of all the things we have and more to do with the very gift of life, the gift of love, and the gift of God's loving presence with us.

Jesus' mother, Mary embodies this spirit, when she sings in thanksgiving for her blessings in the midst of dealing with all the fallout of her pregnancy with Jesus: a fiancé who isn't sure if he can trust her and stay with her, a community judging her harshly as an unwed teenage mother in a time when that was considered unacceptable.

All that is true, and yet she sings: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1:46-48). Her spirit rejoices, and she boldly claims herself as blessed in the midst of it all because she trusts that God is with her and doing something amazing.

How can we cultivate this practice of gratitude not through comparisons but through the awareness of God with us this holiday season? As you reflect back over the year or perhaps over your life, where have you seen and noticed God's presence with you? May we sing with Mary this Thanksgiving and Christmas season, aware and grateful for the many ways God is present and at work in all of our lives.

Blessings, *Pastor Mike*



## **National Donor Sabbath Bullentin** **November 12-14, 2021**

National Donor Sabbath seeks to educate faith-based communities about the need for organ, eye and tissue donors. This national initiative partners with houses of worship and faith-based organizations to educate congregations about the critical need for donors and to dispel myths about the donation process. All major religions support organ and tissue donation.

### ***Did you know that the need for people to register as organ donors is more critical than ever?***

- More than 100,000 people across the United States are waiting for life-saving organ transplants – an average of 17 people die each day waiting for an organ.
- In Gift of Life's service area – eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware – 5,000 men, women and children are waiting for life-saving organ transplants.
- One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people, and a tissue donor can improve the lives of more than 100 others.

### ***It is easy to register to be an organ and tissue donor.***

- Add the donor designation to your driver's license or state I.D. card at the DMV.
- Register online by visiting [donors1.org](https://donors1.org), it takes only 30 seconds.
- Gift of Life encourages everyone to discuss organ donation with loved ones to make their personal preferences known.

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## THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST

**Mark your calendars now!** This year we are planning to have a Thanksgiving breakfast/fellowship time on the Sunday before Thanksgiving (Nov. 21). We are however changing things from the way we've done this event in the past because of the changing landscape of social interaction due to the pandemic. So, instead of one event we will be having two. The breakfast will be downsized to more of a continental style breakfast with casseroles, pastries, fruit, coffee, and juice from 8-9:30 in Fellowship Hall and then at 10:00 we will have a Thanksgiving themed worship service. You can decide to attend both events or just worship depending on your comfort level.

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Advent is just around the corner, and we have some wonderful events planned for this season of preparation.

**Advent Wreath:** Would you and your family like to take one of the 4 Sundays of Advent (Nov.28, Dec. 5, 12,19) to light the Advent Candles at the beginning of worship for that week? This is a wonderful way to participate in the season so please let Pastor Mike know if you are interested.

**Advent Sermon Series:** The Advent Sermon series will begin on Sunday, November 28<sup>th</sup> this year Pastor Mike will be speaking about the meaning of Christmas and using items provided by members. Maybe it's Christmas cards, a manger scene, candles, or other decoration or object that is meaningful. It could be serious or funny, large (needs to be able to fit in the sanctuary) or small. Maybe it's a food? Could it be a person? We'll find out in Advent! Thank you to all those who donated an item!

**Gifts for Jesus – 2021:** Celebrating the Birthday of Jesus

This year there are three opportunities for sharing with others.

1. UMCOR Disaster Response to help many areas recover from Wildfire and Flood Disaster – This is through the United Methodist church, thus 100% of the money collected is used for this project.
2. Gift Bags for Female Inmates at the Lebanon County Correctional Facility – **Note:** Due to Covid, gift bags cannot be taken into the facility. However a \$10 donation will provide for the items purchased by LCCF team members; thus the inmates will still get a gift bag (thermal undershirt, shampoo, deodorant and a pair of white socks).
3. Lebanon County Christian Ministries – Due to Covid, there are many families tapping into their services. As we count down the days to the birth of Jesus, each week listed items will be collected in the church narthex.  
November 28 - Laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, paper towels, toilet paper, diapers (Size 4, 5, or 6)  
December 5 – Canned meats (spam, chicken, Dinty Moore) Instant mashed potatoes, canned chili, etc.  
December 12 – Plastic jars of 18 oz. Peanut Butter and 12-18 oz. Grape Jelly, Cereals, Complete Pancake mix  
December 19 – Soups, Canned Fruits, Canned Pasta (SpaghettiOs, Ravioli)

*Please make checks payable to Mount Gretna United Methodist Church. Note: UMCOR and/or Gift Bags on the check. Let us respond to Christ's command to feed the hungry, care for the sick, comfort the heartbroken and welcome the stranger in our midst.*

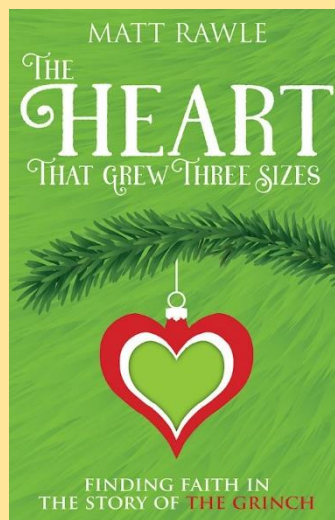
**Advent Bible Study:** We also will be offering a 4-week Advent bible study this year. The class will be offered as a hybrid of in person or via Zoom depending on the participants' comfort level.

Pastor Mike hopes that all of our congregation members will join in reading this short study over the Advent Season even if you can't attend the weekly gatherings. It would be great to literally have everyone on the same page this year during Advent as we prepare for the coming of the Lord.

The study is a fun one too. Author [Matt Rawle](#) has prepared it, using Dr Suess's classic *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. Copies will be made available in a couple weeks. Please let Pastor Mike know if you would like one. They are free, but if you would like to give a \$10 donation for your copy to offset the costs your generosity would be greatly appreciated.

Sessions will be offered on Sunday evenings at 6:30 PM starting November 28<sup>th</sup>. There will also be posts on the church's Facebook page to discuss some of the discussion questions as well.

**The Heart That Grew Three Sizes:** "Rediscover the gift of Advent that comes without packages, ribbons, and bows. We don't know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know he did. If we're being honest, there's probably something within the Christmas season celebration that awakens a Grinch within all of us. Maybe the gift we unwrap was all wrong, or memories that were supposed to be joyful never were. When everything seems wrong in the world, even joyful celebrations are much too loud. In his new Advent study, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in the Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* including how did the Grinch's heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate, is the one thing that changes our life? Rediscover and reinvigorate your Christian faith this Advent and Christmas season and look at this familiar classic through the lens of faith."





You have probably seen the display of Prayer Shawls in the church (hallway??) and might have wondered about them.

A number of years ago, a group of women in the congregation decided to knit or crochet these shawls/blankets to be given to members and friends who were in need of a tangible reminder of God's love—whether they were ill, grieving or going through any hard time. With them, we include the following note:

*This gift of a prayer shawl is to remind you of God's ever-present love, as near to you as your own skin is to your body. You have received this shawl from the people of the Mt. Gretna United Methodist Church. That maker of this shawl prayed while making it. After it was made, it was prayed over by our pastor and the congregation at one of our morning worship services.*

*This gift is given in the hope that it may offer God's presence to you in times of joy and sorrow.*

*Whenever you wear it or have it close to you, be reminded that God loves you and cares for you. This shawl is now yours to enjoy and use as you will. Remember that prayers surround you.*

*May God's loving care and eternal peace be yours.*

We are currently considering renewing this ministry. Although it could be fun to meet occasionally and stitch together, the shawls could also be made at home and donated to the church supply.

If you are interested, please contact Pastor Marilyn at [Marilynn@jub.org](mailto:Marilynn@jub.org) or call her at 717.269.8613.

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## **2021 CHARGE CONFERENCE**

Yes, it's that time of year again! Charge Conference is just around the corner. So, it is time to hold the meetings and fill out the forms as we prepare to review the past year's ministry and to set goals for next year. Watch your Sunday bulletin for committee meetings and times.

This year, Charge Conference will once again be held with other churches of our area and will be held on: **Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM at Rocherty UMC.** District Superintendent, Rev. Bumkoo Chung will preside at the meeting.

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## **WEEKLY ZOOM PRAYER MEETINGS THURSDAYS AT 7PM**

You are invited to join Pastor Marilyn and members of our congregation as they come together on Zoom to pray for the joys and concerns of friends and family, our nation and the world. The group was formed during the Covid lockdown and continues to be a time of fellowship and taking our cares to God.

ZOOM can be done on a laptop, tablet or smart phone. If you have email: the church will send you an email every week with the link. BUT PLEASE NOTE--ZOOM calls can also be made from any cell phone by dialing in to the phone number that is in the weekly email.

Don't forget: We still have an email Prayer Chain that is coordinated by member Sarah Ellis. You may call the office with prayer requests at 717.964.3241 or email them directly to Sarah at [stellis999@gmail.com](mailto:stellis999@gmail.com). If you have any questions, feel free to call Pastor Marilyn at 717.269.8613

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## **FOOD BANK SUNDAY**

The first Sunday of each month we collect money, non-perishable food items and paper products for the Lebanon County Christian Ministry Food Bank.

We thank those who have participated in the past and encourage everyone to use the list of suggested items that can be picked up in the church lobby each month to help with purchasing items that are needed.