



Mount Gretna UMC

Happenings

December 2021

Dear Friends,

Christmas for me has always been about remembering the good and happy times spent with friends and family. I think that for many of us Christmas is as much about the memories of past years as it is about the present one. We enjoy remembering and telling stories about Christmases of long ago and decorate our trees with ornaments that hold special memories of loved ones. There is just something about Christmas that beckons us to look back into the past to try and relive and cherish the special moments that are there.

One special memory and moment that we all share is of the very first Christmas which took place in the hills of a small town called Bethlehem. It was there that God entered the world as a baby, became flesh and blood, and dwelt among us. It was there that God, through Christ, gave up the glory of Heaven to come to a dark and dreary earth and bring hope, peace, love, and joy to our world.

My prayer this Christmas is that you will remember to keep that first Christmas in the forefront of all your other memories. May we prepare in our hearts a place for Christ to enter, be born anew, and dwell among us by remembering to take time for prayer, bible reading, and worship, so that we can re-discover the awe and wonder of God's greatest gift of all, his only son Jesus.

My hope for you this Christmas is that as you go about all the activities of the season you will remember to keep Christ at the center of everything and find the hope of Christ in your life and spirit.

God bless you all,

Pastor Mike

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.



Advent Sermon Series: For our Advent Sermon series this year Pastor Mike will be speaking about the meaning of Christmas and using items provided by members. 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. It's a food? Could it be a person? We will 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: during the weeks leading up to Christmas we continue our 4-week Advent bible study on the book, *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes*, by Matt Rawle. Sessions are offered on Sunday evenings at 6:30PM and are both in-person and via Zoom. There will also be weekly posts on the church's Facebook page to consider as you read the book.



This Year our Church will again be holding two Christmas Eve Services. The early service will be at 7pm and the late service will be at 11pm. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend one of these opportunities to worship the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift of love!

*Please check the church website for any updated Covid-19 related updates for these services.

Disability Ministry Update 2021

During the final quarter of 2021, the Mt. Gretna UMC Disability Ministry distributed three awards. The recipients were: Susquehanna Service Dogs, Quest Inc., and Lebanon Vision Corps.

I received a very heartfelt thank you card from Jeff Veasley, recipient of an award from Lebanon Vision Corps. The card is addressed to me but is collectively intended for the entire congregation. The award of forty-five dollars was the lowest award amount to date but garnered one of the most heartfelt expressions of appreciativeness. The award was used to purchase Jeff a new white cane that is also collapsible, which makes it more manageable to store when not being used. The ministry offered to purchase Jeff a white cane of higher quality compared to his previous model. He told us that was not necessary. Jeff stated the singular and most important feature of a cane for him is the grip and how it fits his hand to manipulate it most efficiently.

The message in the first sentence of Jeff's card, "You are a blessing because God gave you that ministry." Sometimes it takes a complete stranger to make the obvious plain. God did indeed lead me to the disability ministry, helped me recognize the need, directed me, and prompted my inquiry about the possibility of establishing a disability ministry. God also directed each individual person serving on the committee that granted the approval to establish and fund the ministry.

In addition, I want to publicly thank all the members of the Endowment Committee for making the disability ministry a reality since 2020. Moreover, approving the grant requests submitted for the funding required to fulfill all outreach ministries within our community.

Finally, the disability ministry is looking forward to forming a new partnership with Developmental Disability Services (DDS), Lebanon, Pa. The ministry anticipates providing one to three scholarships, which will be used to send disabled children who are their clients to a weeklong daytime summer camp.

Kindest Regards,

Randy L. Swope



You have probably seen the display of Prayer Shawls in the church Lobby 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 needed 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 or call her at 717.269.8613.

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.

Do not 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. If you have any questions, feel free to call Pastor Marilyn at 717.269.8613

MGUMC Budget Summary

Category	2022	2021	Dollar Change
Offerings	\$149,300	\$158,500	(\$9,200)
Contribution from Endowment	\$38,004	\$38,004	\$0
Other Income	\$75,518	\$68,253	\$7,265
Total Operating Income	\$262,822	\$264,757	(\$1,935)
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$280,032	\$270,905	\$9,127
Budget Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$17,210)	(\$6,148)	(\$11,062)
Endowment Annual Grants	\$69,818	\$62,553	\$7,265

The above table is a summary of the 2022 budget compared to the 2021 budget.

Explanation of categories

Offering: Envelopes, Plate, Church School, Beacon and Building funds

Contribution from Endowment: The grant amount received from the endowment for operational expenditures of the MGUMC.

Other income: Miscellaneous, Flowers, Bible study, funds from the Endowment for nonoperational grants.

Total Disbursements: Budgeted expenses for operation of the church, including the nonoperational grants distributed.

Surplus/(Deficit): This line states how well the receipts of MGUMC is offsetting the budgeted disbursements.

Endowment Annual Grants: Grants other than the "Contribution from Endowment."

If you would like to order Poinsettias this year, please use the form below or call the Church Office at 717-964-3241.

Once again this Christmas we will be decorating the church with sponsored Poinsettias. You will be able to pick up your plant(s) following Either Christmas Eve Service.



POINSETTIAS

If you wish to sponsor a plant, fill out the Slip below, mail it to the church, or call the Church office at 717-964-3241. All flowers come in a 6.5" pot with 5+ blooms.

ORDERS DUE BY DECEMBER 12th

<u>Poinsettia Color</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Number</u>
RED	\$8.25	_____
WHITE	\$8.25	_____

Presented by (Your Name) **PLEASE PRINT**

Phone: _____

In Memory Of: _____

In Honor Of: _____

Please make checks payable to:
Mount Gretna UMC
PO Box 427
Mount Gretna, PA 17064