

# Simsbury United Methodist Church

## The Messenger

December 2017 / January 2018

Open hearts, open minds, open doors

## The Cookie Caper and the Christmas Workshop Return to SUMC!

The annual *Cookie Caper* will be held Saturday, December 9, in Wesley Hall from 10:00 a.m.—noon (or until we run out!) and all proceeds benefit the youth summer mission trip. Bakers and helpers (and shoppers!) are needed:

**Bakers:** Please bake cookies – the more decorative and festive the better! Donations can be dropped off in the church kitchen anytime! Contact Heather Ryan or Missy Iler with questions.

**Helpers:** Youth (grades 6 and above) are needed to help shoppers fill boxes with goodies and for set up/clean up. Sign up with Pastor Peter.

**Shoppers:** Come to the sale from 10:00 a.m. to noon (Note: we usually sell out by 11:30, but no early birds, please.)

**The 4th Annual SUMC Children's Christmas Workshop** will be held Saturday and Sunday, December 9 and 10, 10:00 a.m.—Noon. Send your children 10-and-under to the Christmas Workshop in Creative Cove, where they will enter through a special door with their Christmas shopping lists and a little spending money. Small homemade crafts and gifts (nothing over \$10) will be available for children to buy for their loved ones. We'll wrap and label their selections, so family members can truly be surprised on Christmas morning. All of the proceeds will benefit charities chosen by the children. Please contact Heather Kaliden at [rockwood7777@yahoo.com](mailto:rockwood7777@yahoo.com) or 860.651.3300 for information.

## A Chance to Help Others



The Giving Tree went up in Wesley Hall on Sunday, November 27. This year, gifts will go to families at SUMC and to Covenant to Care for Children (CCC). Please take a “tag” to help others this holiday season! Donations are due (with tag attached, please) to Wesley Hall by Dec 10 for CCC and Dec 17 for local family items.

Joanne Maurer and Claudia Nepley have taken over as CCC liaisons from Lori Burrous. Thank you Lori for your many years in this important role, and welcome Joanne and Claudia!

## A Detailed Calendar of Christmas Events at SUMC...

...appears on page 6.

## Important Dates

**December 9:** Men's Fellowship breakfast, 7:30 a.m.; Cookie Caper & Children's Workshop, 10:00 a.m.

**December 10 & 17:** Last day to return items for Giving Tree – date on each ornament

**December 17:** Lessons & Carols, 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.; Christmas caroling, 2:00 p.m.

**December 18:** Duely Noted A Capella concert, 7:00 p.m.

**December 24:** Advent worship, 10:00 a.m.; luminary assembly/set up, 11 a.m. / 3:30 p.m.; Family Service, 5:00 p.m.; Worship Service, 11:00 p.m.

**December 25:** Merry Christmas! Office closed

**December 31:** Combined worship service at 10:00 a.m.

**January 1:** Happy New Year! Office closed

**January 20:** KISSS Day

**January 22:** ASP mission trip meeting, 6:30 p.m. in the Barn

**January 30:** Church Council meeting, 6:30 p.m.

## Pastor's Page

The last Sunday of the liturgical year (Nov. 26 this year) is Christ the King Sunday, and the scripture of the day is the parable of a judgment day when the king separates sheep from goats. I preached a sermon at the 8:00 and 9:00 services but our D.S. was here to preach at the 10:30 service. Since I received a number of comments on my sermon, I have included an abridged copy here. If you would like a complete copy just email me.

In the parable in Matthew 25:31-46, the sheep are the good guys, the goats are not? Why? According to the story, the people who did right are the ones who cared about others, who offered help to those in need. They recognize the humanity of others and realize that they too are dependent on others.

The kingdom of heaven is like this—it is like people caring for one another. People who see the needs of their brothers or sisters who are hungry or naked or in prison or sick—and they respond with kindness and compassion. They do this because it is their nature to care, they would not feel right not helping. Who are the sheep and goats today? We hear about them in the news all the time:

What does the powerful man see? A sex object over whom he has power and control? He can use her to get what he wants? Or is he able to see a young vulnerable woman with hopes and dreams of being a politician, a movie star, or who just wants to make a living and he can help her?

What do you see? A welfare recipient who is a leach on society, taking without paying? Or can you see a woman, deserted by her boyfriend, whose dreams of a home and family were long ago snuffed out, with three children to care for who struggles to make ends meet and to find meaning and purpose in life? Who needs someone to care, to help.

What do you see? Another rich man who pushes papers around in a hedge fund but does nothing for society? Who greedily takes more and more and buys politicians to help him make even more? Or can you see a man with an addiction to making money who can't sleep nights because it never seems to be enough no matter how much he has? Who is unhappy because all his friends are bought and paid for.

What do you see? An old codger who drives too slowly and holds up traffic, who walks around unaware of the lunch stains on his shirt? Or a lonely man who every day drives down to visit his wife in the Memory Unit of the nursing home even though she does not recognize him. Who wishes he had a friend to talk to, who thinks about suicide.

What do you see—just one more immigrant coming into this country when we have too many people here already—she is bringing her different customs and religion and language—and she is frightening? Or do you see one more of the huddled masses who have come here to be free and only wants a chance to be an American.

What do you see? A 15 year old juvenile delinquent out drinking and making too much noise? Or a lost young man who is trying to find his way; in desperate need of a role model?

What do you see? A right wing politician who supports the police right or wrong and wants to end all entitlements? Or a statesman who feels overwhelmed by the political climate of this country and is trying to hold on to what he believes is essential to make this nation great?

What do you see? A left wing idealist with a who won't stand for the national anthem and supports Obama-Care? Or a frustrated woman who feels overwhelmed by the political climate of this country and is trying to hold on to what she believes is essential to make this nation great?

***The article continues on the next page.***

## **Pastor's Page, *continued from previous page***

The difference between the sheep and the goat is not so much a conscious decision by the sheep to do good, rather, it a recognition on the part of the sheep that the person in need is a sister or brother who longs to be loved and is not beyond redemption. Thus, with this recognition, the sheep allow themselves to be moved by compassion, they feel what the other feels, they hurt, they care, they act.

When asked if there was hope that there would be peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis Mr. Shimon Peres, a former prime minister of Israel replied: "Of course there is."

he said, "When we were Adam and Eve, we were all one. Is there any need for us now to be divided into segments with hatred for one another?"

He told a very interesting story that he said he had heard from a Muslim. The Muslim told of a Jewish rabbi who was conversing with two of his friends. The rabbi asked one of the men, "How do you know when the night is over and a new day has begun?"

The second was asked the same question. He replied, "When you look into the distance and can distinguish an olive tree from a fig tree, then you know morning has come." No

His friend replied, "When you look into the east and can distinguish a sheep from a goat, then you know the night is over and the day has begun." No

They then asked the rabbi how he could tell when the night is over and the day has begun. He thought for a time and then said, "When you look into the east and see the face of a woman and you can say, 'She is my sister.' And when you look into the east and see the face of a man and can say, 'He is my brother.' Then you know the light of a new day has come."

Jesus said, they will know that you are my followers if you do what I command you, and this is the command that I give –love one another as I have loved you.

That is all there is to it.

~ *Pastor Woody*

## **You Are Invited to the Hartford Korean UMC**

This past summer, church member Ryann Soltero attended Shenandoah University Youth Theology Institute in Winchester, Virginia. She returned enthused about all that she had learned and excited about the prospect of having her church reach out to the Korean Methodist community.

On January 21 her efforts will begin to bear fruit as members of SUMC are invited to attend worship at the Hartford Korean UMC followed by a potluck meal. The confirmation class and their families are encouraged to attend and others are welcome to join us and bring a dish to share that their family enjoys. Members of the Korean community will bring traditional dishes to share as well as we begin to appreciate one another's culture.

Pastor Woody will give the sermon that day at Hartford Korean, which will be translated into the Korean language. We hope this this will be the beginning of shared ministries between our two churches.

## KISSS Day Is January 20

Mark your calendar for the next KISSS (Knit, Inspire, Sew, Stamp, & Scrap) Day! All crafters are welcome – as well as anyone who wants to join in the fun and fellowship!

Sign-up now for Saturday, January 20, 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. in Wesley Hall. Please bring a potluck dish to share and a suggested donation of \$25 to benefit a church mission. There'll be lots of space for crafting, breakfast munchies, lunch, dinner, and snacks through the day along with great fellowship! Contact Linda Stroud at [linda.stroud3@gmail.com](mailto:linda.stroud3@gmail.com) or 860-212-9616 (call or text) with any questions or to sign-up.

## Holiday Bulletin Covers

Again this year we continue the tradition of having special bulletin covers during the Advent and Christmas season. Bulletins may be given in celebration, in honor, or in memory of a loved one, and your dedication will be printed on the back of the bulletin for that service.



Bulletins are available on a first come basis. Contact the office to see what dates are still available.

## Greeting Card Sale

Christian greeting cards will be on sale in Wesley Hall following all three worship services on **Sunday, January 7**. Cards are just 50 cents each and all money raised is used to purchase new cards! Thank you to Barbara Vasquenza for coordinating the sale each month.

## Visitation Team Ministry Opportunity

The Lay Visitation Team, led by Sandee Fleet, assists with Pastoral Care by visiting people on a regular basis who are home-bound or in Assisted-Living Facilities. The team also includes Eucharistic Ministers who celebrate Holy Communion with those whom they visit. This past year we served 17 people with a team of 10 volunteers. Several people on the team have recently retired from this ministry so there are new opportunities for service in this area.

If you enjoy visiting with seniors one-on-one, if think you have a spiritual gift of mercy/compassion, and have good active listening skills, this could be a great ministry for you. For more info, please contact Sandy Fleet at 508.971.8085 or [msfleet4333@comcast.net](mailto:msfleet4333@comcast.net).

## Are You Experiencing the Christmas Blues?

The joy of Christmas can turn into a time of painful loneliness and emptiness for those who have suffered a loss or who are going through a difficult time. But help is available. Our Stephen Ministers are ready to provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care. They will listen, care, encourage, pray with and for you, and support you through the holidays and as long as your need persists.

If you or someone you know is hurting, find out more about Stephen Ministry by talking with Pastor Woody or Pastor Peter, 860.651.3356, or Barbara Vasquenza, Referrals Coordinator, 860.677.4750. ***Our Stephen Ministers are there to care!***

## Room at the Table

*Jesus said, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous... Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled." [LUKE CHAPTER 14]*

Most of us will all spend time with friends and relatives around the dinner table over the holidays. This is a good thing, but during this season, we do well to ask ourselves what we can do to make room at the table for those we don't know, for the impoverished and the less fortunate. We may not have occasion to actually invite a stranger to a meal at our home (maybe we will!); nevertheless, at least we can explore ways in which we can go out of our way, at least figuratively, to "make room for them at the table."

I was recently inspired by a BlogSpot by Brad Aronson who started a list to help us reach out to others with acts of kindness this Christmas. Here are some ideas to get us started:

### **Purchasing Gifts for Friends and Strangers at the Same Time.**

- When purchasing Christmas gifts online, use <https://smile.amazon.com/> or <https://www.igive.com> and a percentage of your purchase price will go to the charity of your choice at no extra cost to you.
- [www.onesimplewish.org/](http://www.onesimplewish.org/) has a list of Christmas wishes from foster youth, compiled by social workers and other professionals who work with children.
- <http://www.givebackbox.com/> Make room for the new by giving away the old. Givebackbox.com will provide a prepaid shipping label so you can have the items shipped to Goodwill at no charge.

### **Virtual Visits.**

- Send cards to lonely seniors at <http://www.lovefortheelderly.org/>
- Send cards to children who are fighting serious illnesses at <http://www.sendkidstheworld.com/index.php/home.html> and <http://www.cardsforhospitalizedkids.com/>

### **The Gift of Healing.**

- <https://www.miraclefeet.org/> \$250 will treat one child's clubfoot, and change that child's life forever.
- <http://www.cureblindness.org/> Himalayan Cataract Project restores sight by providing a 10-minute surgery that fixes cataracts for \$200 per eye.

### **Being Neighborly.**

- "Can I pick something up for you?" Sometimes the holiday crowds can be daunting. If you're going to the store already, call a neighbor you think could use a break and ask if she'd like you to pick something up for her while you're at the store.
- I know in New England we usually don't visit our neighbors without making an appointment a week in advance, but why not make Christmastime the exception to the rule by dropping by with a plate of cookies or a simple gift and note.

### **Encouraging Kindness in Others.**

- Think of one or two amazing people in your life. Take a moment to write a letter telling them what you admire about them and the example that they have given you in how to live a better life.
- When you see people doing something good or kind, tell them. It's always a great time to give out compliments, but since the holidays can be harried, your compliments might be even more appreciated than usual. If you have something nice to say, then say it!

Finally, do that thing that you've been thinking about doing for a while now but haven't gotten around to yet. Find your own charity, give in your own way, or participate in one of the holiday ministries that your church sponsors.

*...And Have a very Merry Christmas! ~ Pastor Peter*



## SUMC Christmas Season Calendar

**There is always a lot happening at SUMC at the holidays! Join us as often as you can! There are three services (8:00, 9:00, and 10:30 a.m.) on December 3 and 10; the worship schedules for December 17, 24, and 31 are noted below.**

**Saturdays in December: Advent Study** with Pastor Woody, 9:30 a.m. in the Annex

### **Saturday, December 9**

- **Christmas Workshop for Children** 10 and younger to purchase handmade gifts, 10:00 a.m. to Noon in the Verdin Parlor
- **Cookie Caper** (Christmas cookie sale), 10:00 to 12 noon, in Wesley Hall

### **Sunday, December 10:**

- **Christmas Workshop for Children**, 10:00 a.m. to Noon in the Verdin Parlor
- **Gingerbread Cookie Making**, 11:45 a.m., in the kitchen during Pageant dress rehearsal
- **Christmas Pageant**, 4:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary (Pre-Pageant recital at 3:30)

**Saturday, December 16:** Flower decorating in the Sanctuary, 11:30 a.m.

### **Sunday, December 17:**

- **Communion Service at 8:00 a.m. in the Annex Prayer Room**
- **Service of Lessons and Carols** at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary
- **Christmas Caroling**, meet at 2:00 p.m. in parking lot

**Wednesday, December 20:** office closes at noon for staff holiday luncheon

### **Sunday, December 24:**

- **Advent Worship Service**, 10:00 a.m.
- **Luminary setup**, 3:30 p.m.
- **Family Christmas Eve Service**, 5:00 p.m.
- **Christmas Eve Service**, 11:00 p.m.

**Monday, December 25:** **Merry Christmas!** Church office closed.

**Sunday, December 31:** Communion service, 8:00 a.m.; Traditional worship, 10:00 a.m. (both services in the Sanctuary)

**Monday, January 1:** Happy New Year! Church office closed.

## Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet on **January 30 at 6:30 p.m.** in the Barn. All church members are invited.

## Christmas Pageant and Gingerbread Men!

**Gingerbread Cookie Making** All are welcome on Sunday, December 10, from 11:45 a.m.—12:30 p.m. in the kitchen (during the pageant dress rehearsal) for cookie baking and fellowship! Amy Bobinski will have the dough ready and waiting for rollers and cutters. The convection ovens make short work of baking 80-100 cookies in 45 minutes! Cookies are used for the Christmas Pageant reception later that day. Kids and adults alike love decorating and eating the cookies! This has become a wonderful tradition. Bring your rolling pins, gingerbread cookie cutters, and aprons and enjoy the fun!



**Annual Christmas Pageant** The Christmas Pageant is Sunday, December 10, at 4:00 p.m. in the sanctuary, with the delightful Pre-Pageant Recital beginning at 3:30 p.m. This year's pageant is a traditional pageant, with all of the beloved carols you enjoy hearing this time of year. Mary, Joseph, a real baby Jesus, Shepherds, Angels, the three Kings, Prophets, and the Angel Gabriel all participate in this wonderful re-telling of the birth of Christ. We are one of the few area churches that does a fully costumed pageant with traditional carols—you won't want to miss it!

~ Dorothy Cowles

## Adult Music Ministry

Another year and another season of hope is here at SUMC.

So much has happened this year and I feel it is just a new beginning. But music is the hope and the joy of this world. Advent is here and my fellow singers asked me to invite YOU to sing with them for the Christmas season. Please, please, please (remember this song by James Brown) share the joy, the friendship, and fellowship we all enjoy during choir rehearsals on Thursday evenings at 7:20 p.m. We have so much fun we can't stop laughing when we leave the room. Music is the joy of life.

Our rehearsals for Christmas music began Thursday, November 16, in the choir room at SUMC. Join us at any time – it's never to late, and you do not need to read music. I DON'T!

Our Bell Ringers will be playing on Lessons & Carols – not to be missed! Our Chancel Choir will deliver an amazing Anthem on Christmas Eve. Again, not to be missed! We do it for all of YOU! Lessons & Carols, Advent Season, Christmas Eve...what a wonderful time to share....come sing with us!

~ Yves Venne

## February Newsletter Deadline

Please email items for the February 2018 issue of the newsletter to [hryan@snet.net](mailto:hryan@snet.net) by January 16, 2018.



## Circles

The Susanna Circle will meet for our annual Christmas potluck on Tuesday, December 12, at 6:00 p.m. in the Annex.

We will not meet in January.

In February we will meet on Saturday, February 3, to make our famous Methodist Munch, which we will sell the following day, Super Bowl Sunday, after each service. All proceeds will go to Interval House, a domestic violence shelter. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. for breakfast at Bennie's, after which we will gather in the church kitchen to make the Munch. If you will join us for breakfast on Feb. 3, contact Lucille Burke at [lucilleburke@comcast.net](mailto:lucilleburke@comcast.net).

For information contact Rolene Johnson at [halandrolene@gmail.com](mailto:halandrolene@gmail.com) or 860.658.0634. We are a friendly group who will welcome any of you who want to join us.

The **Rachel Circle** will meet for its Christmas Party on 9:30 a.m. on December 13 at the home of Jean Staley. The Rachel Circle will meet on January 10 at 9:30 a.m. in the Annex.

The **Rebekah Circle** is scheduled to meet on December 21 and January 18, at noon in the Annex living room.

**Prayers and Squares Quilters** meet on December 5, 8, and 15, and on January 12 and 19, at 1:00 p.m. in the Annex Upper Room.

## Salvation Army Ringers

It is that time of year again. I am again coordinating Salvation Army bell ringers for the town of Simsbury. If anyone from SUMC would like to volunteer (either groups or individuals), please let me know! Last year, I was overwhelmed by the number of people who were willing to step up and make the kettle drive a success.

The Salvation Army has been very busy this year, as it has been on the front lines for all the hurricanes, providing support and meals to those affected by Harvey, Irma, and Maria. While the funds we raise mostly stay local, everything helps.

This year we will be ringing on December 9, 16, and 23 at both Fitzgerald's and Stop and Shop. Please let me know if and when you would like to ring. Thanks in advance.

~ Debbie Dunn

## Let's Go Christmas Caroling!

We hear a lot of music around the Christmas season, but for someone who is homebound, hearing live music, seeing the faces of the singers, laughing together, is a very meaningful experience. We will be bringing music to the homes of members beginning at 2:00 on December 17.

Meet in the church parking lot and our first stop will be at Belden Forest, then on to several homes, ending up at the parsonage for hot chocolate, fun, and a mean game of Mario Kart. Make memories for your children, bring the whole family, singers of all levels are welcome.





## Welcome New Members!



Welcome to the Lund-Martins family! **Geoff, Joyce** (nee Martins), and their children live here in Simsbury. Many of you already know Joyce as she joined our church family a couple of years ago. She and Geoff married this summer. Congratulations and best wishes to both Geoff and Joyce! Geoff grew up in Colebrook and is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University. After graduation he joined the Air Force and now Geoff serves in a local police department as a Lieutenant. Geoff and Joyce have three children: **Sierra, Cameron, and Liam**. Geoff and Joyce were drawn to Simsbury UMC by the welcoming congregation, and they appreciate having our church as a regular part of their lives.

On October 22 we welcomed the **Dolch family** to Simsbury United Methodist Church. The Dolches live in Simsbury. **Scott** grew up in Maryland and **Erin** grew up in West Hartford. They met at Central Connecticut where Scott played football and Erin played lacrosse. Scott is currently Assistant Athletic Director at University of Hartford. Erin is a very busy mom at home with their three children. **Mason** is in third grade and enjoys football. **Teagan** is in Kindergarten; she plays ice hockey. Their baby **Harper** is three and a half months old. We're so glad to have you all part of our church family.



**Wil and Norma Gauster** have been frequent visitors recently at SUMC. Wil was born in Austria. As a young student in the U.S., he attended the Northfield Mount Hermon School before matriculating at Harvard University where he earned a Ph.D. in physics. Wil and his family have lived and worked in Germany; Livermore, CA; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and New Mexico. Now retired, he has volunteered at AARP, been a lobbyist, and is presently President of the Board of the Hunters Run Condominium in Avon. Wil has a keen interest in history and loves to travel.

His wife Norma is a lifelong Methodist as she was raised in a Mexican-American Methodist Church in Arizona. Fluent in Spanish, she taught school in California and then moved to New Mexico upon receiving a National Defense Grant to study modern languages. While earning an advanced degree at the University of New Mexico, she met Wil and further worked on the Peace Corps Training Staff for volunteers bound for Latin America. Norma loves to read, enjoys classical music, and is interested in refugee resettlement projects and interfaith relations.

The Gausters visited our church some years ago when one of their two sons was married here by Rev. Mel Kawakami. Moving East from New Mexico to be closer to more convenient European travel and their family, they remembered the area and our church. SUMC has now become their new church home.

**Sharon and Michael Carley** and twin boys, **Alex and Ryan**, live on Brook Drive in West Simsbury. Sharon is from Hyde Park in Dutchess County N.Y. and is an only child. Mike is from Idaho, outside of the capital city of Boise; he grew up with two sisters. He went to the University of Colorado in Boulder and presently works in health care in Farmington. Sharon and Mike met on *E-Harmony* and were married in 2011. The couple enjoyed travelling around Europe before the twins were born. What drew them to SUMC? Sharon replied, "We were moved by the sermons!" (Good job, Pastors Woody and Peter!) Welcome to the Carley clan!



**Dorothy Kramer-Kawakami**, the wife of former SUMC Pastor Mel Kawakami, recently joined SUMC as she and Mel have relocated back to Simsbury. Her bio will appear in the next issue of the newsletter!

## Men's Book Group

Erik Larson's ***The Devil in the White City*** is the next book for discussion in the Men's Book Group. The discussion will be held on Jan 16 at the home of Al D'Agosto at 7:00 p.m.

## Community for Care Offers "True Colors" Program

The Simsbury Community for Care will present a program by the True Colors organization on how parents can be supportive of their children who are coming out as gay or lesbian. Families are often unprepared for this revelation and unsure of how to respond. True Colors offers guidelines to help keep lines of communication open as families adjust to this new reality. The program will be held January 10 at the Simsbury Library and taped to be shown on SCTV in January.

## Advent Study

During the four Saturdays of Advent in December (Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23) Pastor Woody is leading a study by Adam Hamilton entitled "Faithful Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph." The group meets at 9:30 in the Annex. All are welcome; books are available from Pastor Woody.

## Prayers and Condolences

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of **Catherine and Daniel Casper**, following the death of her father, **Richard M. Rowell**, on November 11. A private memorial will take place in Bellows Falls, VT, at the convenience of the family.

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of **Art and Carol Schwartz** following the death of his mother, **Josephine Schwartz**, on November 17. A memorial service was held in Rochester, NY where she resided.

Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of **Tammy and John Papadopoulos** following the death of their nephew, **Jason Snedeker**, on November 24. A memorial service will be held in Florida on December 9 where he resided.



# Church School News

Hello  
SUMC Friends,

***I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.***

I read this scripture to SUMC teachers back on September 9 at our back-to-church-school luncheon. It appealed to me because I was in a new position, unsure of what was to transpire in the upcoming months.

A few months have passed, and I am still drawn to this scripture. It comforts me because at times I can be my own worst enemy about how each Sunday church school lesson went. How did the activities go? Are the children happy? Are the teachers enjoying the lesson and time with the children? Sometimes I can get caught up in all the little details of the day. I take a few moments at the end of a Sunday and look at this scripture again. It's not about me, it's not about the details of the activities, or how a teacher delivered a lesson. It's not even important if the children are happy. For me it's about each one of us – a teacher, a child, a church community coming together with our flaws and imperfections and allowing our creator to change and transform each of us in His perfect way. God is asking each one of us to give our best in what we are called to do. For the teachers and shepherds at SUMC it is to plant his seed/word into the children & for us to watch how God will make it grow in each of us in his own perfect time.



Thanks again to all the 6th/7th graders who wrote Christmas cards in late November to men and women who are incarcerated in our state. Take a moment to “zoom in” on some of the words they wrote. These words are encouraging and meaningful. In God's kingdom no one is left out. I hope these cards bring cheer to someone.

The church school is always looking for new people to help in the ministry. Please contact me at [jody@simsburyumc.org](mailto:jody@simsburyumc.org) or 860.408.1478. We'd love to have you join us!

~ Blessings, Jody

## Youth Group Meetings Held Sunday Evenings

Pastor Peter continues to lead weekly youth group gatherings each Sunday evening, immediately following Confirmation Class. Youth in grades 6 – 12 are encouraged to attend (friends welcome!). The group will meet from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the Barn on the Sundays that Confirmation Class is held. (If Confirmation Class is not held on a particular Sunday, youth group will not meet either.) Come join us! Please contact Pastor Peter if you have any questions about youth group meetings or upcoming youth events at SUMC.

## ASP Meeting

All youth and adults interested in participating in the Summer 2018 youth mission trip with the Appalachian Service Project (ASP) should attend a brief preliminary meeting on January 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the Barn. Contact Pastor Peter for more information.

## The Continuation of the Protestant Reformation

In the November issue of *The Messenger*, history of the early reformers was included ending with the acknowledged start of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 attributed to Martin Luther's efforts. The start included charges of heresy to those early reformers leading to their excommunication and for some their deaths. It also started wars among the church armies and the followers of these early reformers. So a very dark time for the church and not much of an uplifting story for the start of Protestantism. Five hundred years later, Christians - and not only Protestants - are still living with the changes wrought by the Reformation that Martin Luther started. So it is fitting to continue past the start of the reformation and understand how it helped form our current beliefs.

Within the Catholic Church, they initially ignored Martin Luther, but Luther's ideas quickly spread throughout Europe. The Church's response to the threat from Luther and others during this period is called the Counter-Reformation. In 1545 the Church opened the Council of Trent to deal with the issues raised by Luther. The Council of Trent was an assembly of high officials in the Church who met (on and off for eighteen years) principally in the Northern Italian town of Trent for 25 sessions. From these sessions, the following key points were agreed: 1. The Council denied the Lutheran idea of justification by faith. They affirmed, in other words, their Doctrine of Merit, which allows human beings to redeem themselves through Good Works, and through the sacraments. 2. They affirmed the existence of Purgatory and the usefulness of prayer and indulgences in shortening a person's stay in purgatory. 3. They reaffirmed the belief in transubstantiation and the importance of all seven sacraments. 4. They reaffirmed the authority of scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Church. 5. They reaffirmed the necessity and correctness of religious art. The success of the Counter-Reformation on the continent led to further Protestant reform although it was not until the 1640s that changes in England were started. Nonconforming Protestants along with the Protestant refugees from continental Europe were the primary founders of the United States of America.



The United Methodist Church recognized Martin Luther's contributions also as part of this 500th anniversary of his "95 Theses" publication. They included six key ways his writings have shaped our current religion. These are reiterated as stated in an article by Heather Hahn in the United Methodist News Service and included below.

- **An expanded priesthood:** Luther was not the first person to call for reform in the Catholic Church. But you might say he was the first to go viral. The printing press, the Internet of his day, spread his ideas far beyond the university town of Wittenberg. In the days before copyright laws, different printers had no problem with publishing the same works multiple times. Think of it as the 16th-century version of retweets. At one point, an estimated 20 percent of the texts published in Europe had Luther as author, said Richard Manly Adams Jr., interim director of the Pitts Theology Library. The library — part of United Methodist Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta — is home to the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection, which includes the largest assemblage of Luther's writings in North America. The library recently discovered the collection includes two examples of Luther's own handwriting. Among Luther's influential works are three treatises from 1520 that argued both lay and clergy shared in the priesthood of Jesus. This marked the beginning of the doctrine known as the "priesthood of all believers," meaning all baptized have direct access to God without a human mediator.

- **The Bible in everyday language:** If all baptized are priests, they all should have ready access to God's word. That premise led Luther to what was perhaps his most momentous work — a translation of the Bible into vernacular German. He wasn't the first to translate the Old and New Testaments into a language other than Latin. However, Luther was the first to look to the original Hebrew and Greek in his work (rather than Jerome's Latin Vulgate). "Some people say he wasn't such a great scholar of Hebrew or Greek," said Jonathan Strom, professor of church history at Candler. "But what Luther was brilliant at was developing a sort of idiom for the Bible, and it stuck." Among the people influenced by Luther's translation was the English reformer William Tyndale, who likewise wanted to produce a Bible in his people's language. Tyndale's efforts ultimately led to his martyrdom, but not before he completed the translation that would help shape the Geneva Bible used by William Shakespeare, the Pilgrims and the translators of the King James Version. Luther's impact is felt whenever people encounter the Bible in words they can understand.

***The article continues on the next page.***



## Protestant Reformation, *continued from previous page*

- **New ways of worship:** Luther did not stop with Scripture. He also translated the Latin Mass into everyday language. That in turn influenced the creation of England's Book of Common Prayer, which John Wesley would later adapt for his Methodist movement. United Methodists also can thank Luther for making congregational singing a regular part of worship, said the Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources at Discipleship Ministries. "The priesthood of the believers means the congregation needs not just to watch the whole service but to participate actively in the whole service," Burton-Edwards said. Luther also encouraged Christians to pray together in daily services, said Lucy Lind Hogan, the Hugh Latimer Elderdice professor of preaching at United Methodist Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. She is teaching a special course this semester titled "Luther at 500." "He believed gathering frequently for prayer was important in encouraging people's understanding of themselves as part of the priesthood of God," Hogan said. Luther's love of singing lingers in the choral works of Lutheran composers Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel and Felix Mendelssohn.

- **Mass education:** The Reformation benefited from rising literacy that began in the 1440s with Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. But reformers broadened literacy and educational opportunities still further. After all, if you want to understand the Bible or join in a hymn, you need to know how to read. "Protestants built new schools and wrote new catechisms, ushering in an era of lay education," said Anna M. Johnson, a professor of Reformation Church History at United Methodist Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary near Chicago. Some Christians criticized this emphasis on theological education as privileging book learning over rituals, emotions and good works, Johnson said. The Methodist movement, with its emphasis on social holiness, helped correct this imbalance. "At the same time, lay education has been a powerful force for lay engagement in the church, economic progress and democracy," Johnson said.

- **Reminder of repentance:** However, the Reformation wasn't all about empowered laity and joyful chorales. There was a definite dark side to the revolution and to Luther himself. For one thing, the Reformation marked a splintering of denominations that Christians still live with today. Luther did not set out to form a breakaway movement, but once Catholic hierarchy declared him a heretic, he opposed his former church home with fervor. He also was frequently at odds with other reformers. Debates over doctrine soon exploded into bloody wars that would cause death and destruction off and on for the better part of a century. As vitriolic as Luther was about Catholics, he was even more vicious in his late in life writings about his Jewish neighbors. His anti-Semitic rhetoric would echo in the brutality of Nazi Germany. Strom, the Candler professor, said observing the Reformation's anniversary should also be a time of repentance. "It's not just, 'Yay, we're Protestants,'" said Strom, who is Lutheran. He suggested today's Christians heed the first proposition in Luther's 95 Theses: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matthew 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

- **Lady Liberty:** Luther took on the power structures of his day when he refused to recant even in the face of excommunication and possible execution. His challenge to church authority also ignited other uprisings he did not anticipate. He denounced the peasants who, inspired by reforming zeal, rose up against the oppression of nobles and landlords. Nevertheless, Luther could not stop the calls for freedom that stretch from the Peasants' War to human-rights movements today. If people believe they should have a say in church, it's not a huge leap to believe they should have a say in their governance. "Lady Liberty owes a great debt to Martin Luther," said David Teems. He is author of "Godspeed: Voices of the Reformation," a just-released Abingdon Press book of devotionals using writings by Luther and other reformers. "Does the pope set up laws?" Luther wrote in a 1520 treatise. "Let him set them up for himself, and keep hands off my liberty, or I will take it by stealth!" Teems called Luther "a true champion of the conscience." Inspired by that spirit of defiance, a Baptist pastor named Michael King reportedly decided to change his name and that of his young son to that of the reformer's. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. went on to champion freedom and justice in his own way. For United Methodists, Luther's most direct impact may be his staunch defense of the freedom Christians have through Christ's justification by faith. Hearing Luther's preface to Romans helped spur Wesley's spiritual renewal on the night of May 24, 1738. "About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed," Wesley wrote in his diary. "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation ...."

With his heart warmed, Wesley went on to found the movement United Methodists know today. And it likely would not have happened without the Reformation.

~ Jim Ray, SUMC Historian



## Special Service Times on Dec. 17, 24, 31

**December 17:** 8:00 a.m. Communion Service held in the Annex Prayer Room; the Service of Lessons & Carols held in the Sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

**December 24:** 10:00 a.m. Advent Worship Service; 5:00 p.m. Family Service; 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service

**December 31:** 8:00 a.m. Communion Service and 10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service, both in the Sanctuary

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