

First United Methodist Church  
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# FAITH @ FIRST

*McKenzie First United Methodist Church exists to worship God and enable open-minded people to discover the freedom of God's grace through Jesus Christ.*

December 9, 2009

## A WORD from the PASTOR

Children were putting on a Christmas pageant which included the Holy Family coming to the inn. One boy deeply wanted to be Joseph, however when the parts were given out, he was assigned to be the inn-keeper instead. He was pretty upset.

During the rehearsals he often thought of how to get even with this rival who got to be Joseph. The night of the performance, Mary and Joseph came to the inn and knocked on the door. The inn-keeper opened the door and asked them harshly, "What to you want?"

Joseph answered, "We'd like to have a room for the night." Suddenly the inn-keeper threw the door open wide and said, "Great, come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house."

For a few seconds poor little Joseph didn't know what to do. Thinking quickly on his feet, he looked inside the door past the inn-keeper and said, "No wife of mine is going to stay in a dump like this. Come on Mary, let's go to the barn." And once again the play was back on track. While we find this story humorous, have you noticed that in Christmas pageants, Joseph doesn't often get a starring role?

Recently, my daughter Lauren came to me and announced that she had a good idea for an Advent or Christmas sermon. Why not lift up the importance of the role Joseph played in the birth of Jesus? My response was, "I'm all ears, I'm open to this. But let me hear from you. What do you see as his important role?" She replied, "He was brave and courageous to accept Mary, not knowing how she could be with child, yet he remained by her side and lovingly supported Mary and baby Jesus."

I find it so interesting that archeologists have uncovered the ruins of Sapphoris, a thriving city near Nazareth. It is believed that Joseph worked there on carpentry projects and jobs, probably with Jesus. No doubt Jesus was his carpenter apprentice. Here is the WONDER; When Jesus returned to his hometown, the people responded, "Isn't this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" This says to me that Jesus and Joseph were seen as being close and lovingly connected.

Joseph's task was to watch over Mary and the baby Jesus. Joseph had the important role of caring for the needs of others. Joseph became a trustworthy father to the Messiah. Joseph teaches all of us about acceptance and the grace of God.

Peace, Larry



**Sunday, December 13, 10:50 a.m.**

The Chancel Choir will present  
I Hear the Prophet Callin'

Please make your plans to be in worship on Sunday, Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> at the 10:50 a.m. service as we celebrate the gift of God's only Son.

## Christmas Brunch

The **Corinthians** and **Mullins** Sub-groups will meet together for a Christmas Brunch at 10:30, Saturday, December 12 in the home of Betty Brown. Each member is asked to bring a finger food and a \$5.00 donation to the Angel Tree project. Please RSVP to Betty at 352-3904.



Larry, Debbie, and Lauren Riley have invited us to their home for an **Open House** on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

**2010 offering envelopes** are on the table outside the office. If you don't find yours, let Kathy know.

Our **Angel Tree** in the lobby still has some opportunities to make a child happy available.



**Please pray for . . .** Thomas Roditis; Bob & Marilyn Putman; David Byrd; First Place 4 Health participants; Bill, Kristie, Will, & Alexis Reaves; Darra Adkins; Mark Dillon; McKenzie Fire Dept., Police Dept., & Rescue; Ethan Craven; Family togetherness & love; Darlene Martinez; Lois Pugh; Bro. Riley & family; Felicia Mesavage; Keener family; Alice Curnutt; Mary Martinez; Karen May; John D; Adamio, Sr.; Mr. & Mrs. Robert Grice; Mary Jane Sexton Brewer; Vicki Foster; J. W. Sterling; Mark Anderson II & Heather McCartney; Mildred Bunnell; Zach Jarrett; Sandi & Kim McMahan; Zia Locke McKinney; Jon Stanfill; Connie Laymon; Mike, Patty, & Justin Wilson; Anna Weatherford; David "Perk" and Betsy Kee Perkins; Mary Kee; Shirley Martin; Lucy Hickman; Jacob, Leah, & Emma Partridge; Soldiers & family members of 194<sup>th</sup> ENBDE; Betsy Barcroft; Ernestine Branon; Joyce McBride; Betty Simmons; Carolyn Burke; Mary Lou & Bill Boothe; Mary Frances & Don David; Ruth Moncrief; Raymond & Jessie McDade; Lola Alexander; Jean A. Melton; Margaret & Jim Purcell; Ina Faye Hall & family; Muriel Johnson; Mary Jo Vaughn; Ray & Brenda Berryman; Eadie Van Nostrand; Becky Herron; Our troops overseas and at home.

**The next week at our church**

**Sunday, December 13**

9:45 a.m. Sunday School Class  
 10:50 a.m. Chancel Choir Christmas Cantata  
 2:00-4:00 p.m. Riley Open House  
 5:00 p.m. First Place 4 Health  
 6:00 p.m. Peals of Praise Handbell rehearsal

**Monday, December 14**

9:00 a.m. CARE Group meeting

**Wednesday, December 16**

6:00 p.m. FLOW meal and presentation of video made by our youth  
 menu: Ham, veggies, dessert  
 7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir Practice

**VOLUNTEERS FOR THE WEEK**

**NURSERY** – Dianne Anderson, Cherry Russell

**USHERS** – Charles Thompson; chairperson, Edward Sexton, Burnell Beers, Mark Anderson

**Dec. 12 Meals on Wheels Angels**

Cooks: Susan D'Adamio, Betsy Campbell  
 Delivery: Hollye Rider, Tim & Curtis Broadbent

**Dec. 16 Wednesday Office Angels**

Mildred Colotta, Juanita Finley

**Dec. 16 FLOW Kitchen Angels**

Kevan & Gina King, Larry & Debbie Riley, Barney & Lossie Beers, Charles & Betty Thompson, Youth will be clean up crew

**December United Neighbors needed item:**

Volunteer time

**Christmas Card Reminder . . .**

The date to leave your Christmas cards for our Middle School youth to deliver has been extended until Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>. Remember our members who homebound or living in assisted living facilities. Cards delivered by our youth will be a treat for them.

**FUMC Staff**



J. Larry Riley, *Pastor*  
 John Pugh, *Pastor Emeritus*  
 Charlene Jones, *Director of Music*  
 Sandra McMahan, *Organist, Handbell Director*  
 Donna Bruce & Gina King, *C & Y Directors*  
 Kathy Patterson, *Administrative Assistant*

The following letter arrived in the church office by e-mail. Now, I don't know if Jesus actually sent it, but I think he could have.

**Letter from Jesus about Christmas**

It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that folks are taking My name out of the season.

How I personally feel about this celebration can probably be most easily understood by those of you who have been blessed with children of your own. I don't care what you call the day. If you want to celebrate My birth, just GET ALONG AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Now, having said that let Me go on. If it bothers you that the town in which you live doesn't allow a scene depicting My birth, then just get rid of a couple of Santas and snowmen and put in a small Nativity scene on your own front lawn. If all My followers did that there wouldn't be any need for such a scene on the town square because there would be many of them all around town.

Stop worrying about the fact that people are calling the tree a holiday tree, instead of a Christmas tree. It was I who made all trees. You can remember Me anytime you see any tree. Decorate a grape vine if you wish: I actually spoke of that one in a teaching, explaining who I am in relation to you and what each of our tasks were. If you have forgotten that one, look up John 15: 1 - 8.

If you want to give Me a present in remembrance of My birth here is my wish list. Choose something from it:

1. Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way My birthday is being celebrated, write letters of love and hope to soldiers away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know, they tell Me all the time.
2. Visit someone in a nursing home. You don't have to know them personally. They just need to know that someone cares about them.
3. Instead of writing the President complaining about the wording on the cards his staff sent out this year, why don't you write and tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family this year. Then follow up... It will be nice hearing from you again.
4. Instead of giving your children a lot of gifts you can't afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell them the story of My birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I love them.
- 5 Pick someone that has hurt you in the past and forgive him or her.
6. Did you know that someone in your town will attempt to take their own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless? Since you don't know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile; it could make the difference.
7. Instead of nit picking about what the retailer in your town calls the holiday, be patient with the people who work there. Give them a warm smile and a kind word. Even if they aren't allowed to wish you a "Merry Christmas" that doesn't keep you from wishing them one. Then stop shopping there on Sunday. If the store didn't make so much money on that day they'd close and let their employees spend the day at home with their families.
8. If you really want to make a difference, support a missionary -- especially one who takes My love and Good News to those who have never heard My name.
9. Here's a good one. There are individuals and whole families in your town who not only will have no "Christmas" tree, but neither will they have any presents to give or receive. If you don't know them, buy some food and a few gifts and give them to the Salvation Army or some other charity which believes in Me and they will make the delivery for you.
10. Finally, if you want to make a statement about your belief in and loyalty to Me, then behave like a Christian. Don't do things in secret that you wouldn't do in My presence. Let people know by your actions that you are one of mine.

Don't forget; I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your court. And do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love and remember :

I LOVE YOU,  
 Jesus