



The Outlook

University Circle
United Methodist Church

where all are welcome all the time

an edition of
The United
Methodist Reporter

New High School
Group Meets | 8A

New Member News | 4A



New Stained Glass
Window Dedicated | 4A

Two Sections
Section A
909160
Vol. 158 No. 30
November 25, 2011

chalk talk



BY DR. KENNETH W. CHALKER

There are times when the realization of the speed in which the years of my life are passing can overwhelm my thoughts. Don't get me wrong. I am glad that I am able to realize that the years are passing! But, the realization still has its sobering moments.

For instance, this year's Advent and Christmas season will be my 37th as the pastor of a congregation. This means, among other things, that this is the 37th year that I have been, in a local church congregation, principally responsible for the preparations of worship experiences, Advent classes and oversight of all other aspects of this most compelling and meaning-filled season in the life of faith as we follow in the way of Jesus. 37 years!

Across those years there are some things that never change. For instance, one of the questions which is always asked at this holiday time of year is, "Are you ready for Christmas?" I know that all of us have been asked this question. But, to be sure, when the question is asked of me, it becomes particularly sobering.

The reason for the rather unsettling, sober reaction that I experience when this question is posed is that I AM NEVER READY for Advent and Christmas. Knowing that I am never READY for the season, the question draws from me feelings that I must suffer from some significant personal preparedness flaw.

It doesn't matter how many hours of planning have been set aside for a particular season, it doesn't matter how many wonderful program and operations staff, along with many wonderful congregational volunteers, have taken leadership roles, caring for the hundreds of special details and demands that the season brings, I'm still not ready. And, it doesn't matter how LONG the efforts of many, many people have been taking place in the process of getting ready for this central time

Continued on back page

A Christmas Like No Other

Christmas at University Circle United Methodist Church is a season unlike any other. A Cantata with full brass, choir and pipe organ... University Circle CircleFest performances by the Cleveland Youth Orchestra and Chorus... candlelight services that can change your life... you won't find a more moving or compelling Christmas experience than the fulfilling moments you'll feel at University Circle United Methodist Church this holiday season.



Consider this array of offerings:

Sunday, Nov. 27 ~ Receive direction from florist John Wheeler about creating Advent wreaths you'll enjoy all season long; 9:30am in the Great Hall. Singles and families alike will find this a meaningful, fun activity; make reservations via the church office; 216.421.1200.

Wednesday, Nov. 30 ~ Our last in the series of this year's Wednesday Renewal programs features Dr. Chalker's *The Advent of God's Social Network*. Dr. Chalker compares God's relationship with humankind at the time of Christ's birth with current-day relationships through various social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Yoga is also offered at 6pm as an alternative to this program. A 7pm renewal service is open to everyone. RSVP for the 5:30 dinner and 6:00 program/yoga by calling the office; 216.421.1200.

Saturday, Dec. 3 ~ GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING happens at 10am in the Great Hall. Join your church family and friends for a morning of unique holiday fun, decorating your very own gingerbread house for Christmas! See *related article* for more information.

Sunday, Dec. 4 ~ This communion Sunday also offers opportunities to participate in CircleFest activities offered by members of University Circle. Our concerts include presentations by these Cleveland Orchestra Youth Ensembles:

- * 1:45-2:30 pm—Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra Chamber Ensembles
- * 2:30-3:15 pm—Cleveland Orchestra Children's Chorus/Preparatory Chorus
- * 3:15-4:15 pm—Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra Chamber Ensembles
- * 4:15-5:00 pm—Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus

Sunday, Dec. 11 ~ Experience a worship service presenting the *Christmas Cantata in 3 Movements* by Daniel Pinkham, performed with brass and choir in our glorious sanctuary setting. A potluck luncheon follows with a special introduction to American Realist artist Ron Beckham whose artwork will be featured in our hallways as our first in a series of rotating art displays; originals and prints will be available.

Saturday, Dec. 24 ~ Christmas Eve offers three services:

- * 4pm ~ a family service with children participating, along with our bell and gospel choirs
- * 8pm ~ a traditional candlelight service with music offering "Lessons in Carols"
- * 11pm ~ a meditative service with music and candlelight

Sunday, Dec. 25 ~ Christmas Morning Service at 11am, with a message entitled "Jumping with Jesus." Carols and communion will give this service special meaning.



Build a House— Build a Bond

Here's the candy and frosting—you bring the creativity!

GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING happens Saturday, December 3, at 10am in the Great Hall. Join your church family and friends for a morning of holiday fun, decorating your very own gingerbread house for Christmas!

This year, proceeds from this annual event benefit *Rebuilding Together Cleveland*, whose mission is to preserve and revitalize Cleveland houses and communities by helping assure that low-income homeowners—particularly the elderly, disabled and families with children—live in warmth, safety and independence.

If you want to decorate your gingerbread house on December 3, please purchase a ticket in advance; those who just want to observe need no ticket. Purchase tickets at the church office for \$10 on Sunday morning, or call Heather at the church office, 216.421.1200, to reserve a house. If you are unable to attend but would like to support this project, donations will be gratefully accepted. Please make checks payable to UCUMC with the notation "Gingerbread." Even Hansel and Gretel will thank you.

UMW Annual Pecan Sale



The University Circle United Methodist Women again offer Schermer pecans fresh from Georgia in time for your holiday baking! A half-pound bag costs \$6 while a one-pound bag is just \$11. Compared with Giant Eagle, Dave's and Marc's, these prices are not only competitive but include support for local, national and global UMW mission programs. The UMW thanks you very much for your support.

All women are invited to attend the Church Women United Annual Christmas Tea, Friday, December 9, at 12 noon at the Church of the Saviour, 2537 Lee Road.

Donations to the following agencies will be accepted: North Coast Behavioral Health Center; Domestic Violence Center of Cleveland; Community United Head Start; Zelma George Family Shelter; Cleveland Christian Homes Transitional Housing. Suggested items to donate will be posted on the UMW bulletin board.

Tea sandwiches and cookies will be appreciated for the Tea. Contact Anne Billington at 216.932.0689 with any questions.

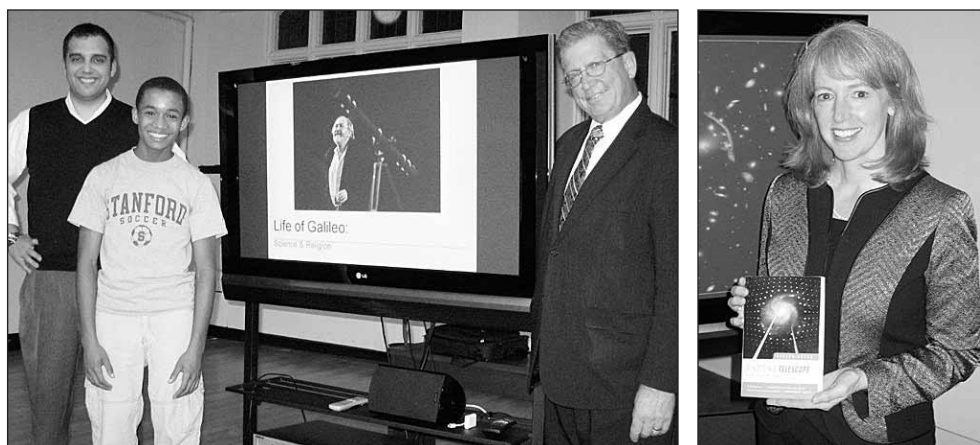
"For Love of Liberty: The Story of America's Black Patriots"

tells the inspiring saga of African-American military sacrifices from the Revolutionary War to present-day fighting in Afghanistan. Art Saunders, First Lieutenant with the Tuskegee Airmen and member of our church, has generously made available two DVD versions of this compelling narrative—a shorter 20-minute summary and a full-length documentary; either is well worth your time to view. If you would like to borrow a DVD for up to two weeks, please make arrangements with Sharon Seyfarth Garner at 440-808-8535.

The United Methodist Reporter (USPS 954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications, 1221 Profit Dr., Dallas Texas, 75247-3919. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas Texas, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: The United Methodist Reporter, P.O. Box 660275, Dallas, Texas 75266-0275.

KALEIDOSCOPE

WEDNESDAY RENEWAL PRESENTERS:



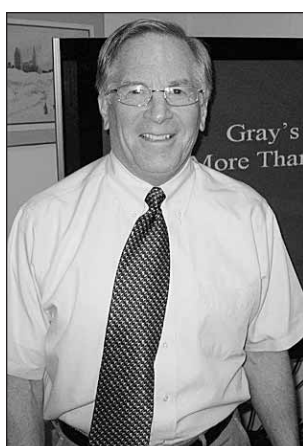
LEFT: Nathan Motta, Arik Floyd and Dr. Chalker offer perspectives on the life of Galileo. RIGHT: Evalyn Gates, PhD, discusses outer-space findings in her book, *Einstein's Telescope*.



SMALL BUT MIGHTY describes the group of folks who baked over 700 pieces of gingerbread for our annual Gingerbread House Benefit on December 3.



LEFT: Author Jan Thrope, with Judy Sockman, introduces her book, *InnerVisions*.



RIGHT: Member Rick Drake, PhD, tells how he authored the new *Gray's Anatomy*.



ABOVE: This Whitney Stained Glass Window, "All Are Welcome," was dedicated on October 30 and hangs in the Great Hall. LEFT: Ralph and Lydia Fotia celebrate 65 years of marriage. BELOW: Dr. Chalker and guest speaker, The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.



UCUMC Welcomes More New Members

On Sundays October 16 and 23, our church family welcomed thirteen more members into our congregation (alphabetically): Dorothy Adams, Michelle Brown, Brandi Dobbs, Ann and Kermit Greeneisen, Katie Jagusch, Carl Jones, Jr., Nathaniel Motta, Amanda Nicol, Dee Perry, Eleanor Shelton, Penelope Talley and Peter Talley.

Some responses to the question of what they appreciate about UCUMC: all are welcome; the diversity and communal spirit of the kind and friendly people; a feeling of acceptance, no matter what your opinions; the excellent sermons and preaching style of Dr. Chalker.

We warmly welcome these newest members of our church family.



THE UNIVERSITY CIRCLE OUTLOOK

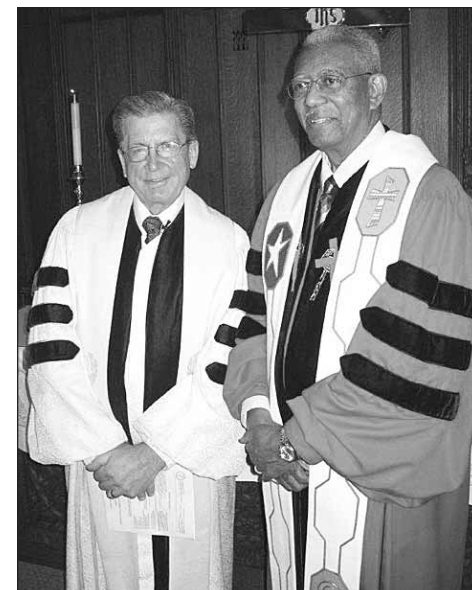
published every four weeks as an edition of THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER for University Circle United Methodist Church
Dr. Kenneth W. Chalker, Senior Pastor
1919 E. 107th St., Cleveland, OH 44106
www.churchinthecircle.com; 216/421-1200

Outlook Editor: Jim Hogg

outlook@churchinthecircle.com

Photographers: Jeff Day, David Hughes, Brain Misch

Editorial Staff: K. Shamp, E. Prince, C. Day, M. Abele



Outreach in Action

Christmas Means Hats, Mittens and Gloves

Our Advent gift-giving theme this year focuses on collecting enough hats, mittens and gloves to provide each of the 216 students of our Cleveland Schools tutor partner, Willow School, with a new hat or pair of mittens/gloves. Plus, we want to provide these same items to the homeless women who receive spiritual support through our Shelter Ministry program. Please bring new “winter warmers” to church by Sunday, December 18, and hang them on or place them under the Mitten Tree outside the Narthex.



Neighborhood Lunch Served on Christmas Day

The monthly Neighborhood Lunch, a free meal for anyone in need, falls on Sunday, December 25 this year. As always, we are in need of individuals willing to donate time and food (recipes will be provided) for this event. The fact that the meal falls on Christmas Day makes it especially critical that we do our best to provide all the support possible to this much-needed ministry. Please contact Jennifer Bier (j_bier@hotmail.com) if you are able to assist in any way.



GRACENOTES

BY NATHAN MOTTA
Director of Music & Arts

This month's Grace Notes—the update on the Music & Arts program at UCUMC—is one big “teaser” for things to come during the Advent season and into the new year:

- Advent will consist of a variety of anthems including a new selection by the Gospel Choir, a moving piece by the Bell Choir featuring suspended, malleted bells, our Liturgical Dancers processing the Advent Wreath lights, a variety of music from the Chancel Choir *and* some holiday songs performed by our children!
- The music during Advent will include an urban gospel selection, a contemporary Christian anthem by John Jacob Niles, a traditional spiritual arrangement by William Dawson and one of the most beloved classical pieces of the Christmas season.
- This year our Chancel Choir, along with the organ and a brass quartet, will perform Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata*. This exciting, rhythmic piece will add a new

sound to the season!

- Christmas Eve will be a magical night with three different worship experiences. The Bell and Gospel Choirs will offer the 4pm service music, the Chancel Choir (with string quartet and woodwinds) will lead the 8pm service and members of the Music & Arts staff and our congregation will perform at the 11pm service. Every service will have candle-lighting. In addition, for all three services you will see the sanctuary illuminated in a way no one has seen it before!
- Looking to 2012, you'll hear about an exciting new initiative in Music & Arts and beyond! There's no doubt that in the new year, University Circle United Methodist Church will take steps to solidify the kind of church we want to become in this 21st century.

Throughout this Advent season and beyond, I encourage you to *sing* out, *clap* your hands, *stomp* your foot, *shed* a tear and *participate* in the worship experience that makes this church so special. Merry Christmas!

High School Youth Group News

McElraths Head Up Youth Group

Dawn and Fred McElrath have joined our staff as Coordinators of our High School Youth Group. Married by Dr. Chalker at First Church 21 years ago, they are long-time members of our faith family and the proud parents of Fred Jr., Angela and Brianna and the loving grandparents of 15-month-old Jamir.

As a project specialist in Heart and Vascular Research at the Cleveland Clinic for the past 16 years, Dawn brings insight and organizational skills to this position. She has known many of our teens since they were babies, as she volunteered for many years in the nursery and Sunday School at First Church. For eight years she has coached cheerleading for girls ages 9–13 but recently stepped aside so she could attend more of Brianna's 8th-grade activities and spend time with baby Jamir. Dawn loves singing in our Gospel Choir and dancing with the Liturgical Dancers.

Fred works as a warehouse attendant at Johnsonite in Middlefield, where he has been employed for 11 years. He coaches basketball for 7th- and 8th-grade boys and has served as a mentor to young men through the Distinguished Gentlemen Organization.

Dawn and Fred bring both vision and a passion for working with young people to their new roles, and we look forward to their leadership in the coming year.



chalk talk

Continued from front page

of beauty and wonder in our faith. The fact of the matter is that I am never READY for Advent and the great festival of Christmas.

No matter the effort, Advent and Christmas just sort of sneak up on me. The moment comes when the realization sinks in that the holy season is here. The thought stirs in my mind, “It just can't be so! I'm not ready.”

You may think the following thoughts to be really self-serving, but it has been occurring to me that in terms of the central meaning of the Advent and Christmas Story, we are never ready. The delivery comes as a surprise. To be sure, we can mark Christmas and all the preparations on the calendar to culminate on the 25th of December, but in terms of the meaning of Jesus' birth, the reality of it arrives as a surprise.

I think of the fact that, prior to Jesus' birth, people who had been anticipating the birth of the Messiah for many centuries and who were well versed in the preparations for Messiah's arrival, were not ready for Jesus.

Prior to Jesus' birth there were many very clear definitions and indications of what the true Messiah would be like, what the Messiah would accomplish and what kind of world would result *because* of the Messiah's arrival. But, all that being so, Jesus was born and no one was ready. In fact, most folks, with the exception of Mary and Joseph and a few shook-up shepherds, were not even paying much attention. The Advent of Christmas—Christ's birth—was all a big surprise.

It still is, and I am so very grateful.

We live in such a scheduled world with all sorts of devices, hand-held and otherwise, that keep us “on time.” We not only know what day it is, but also we are often in a state of instant access to all sorts of breaking news

and ready information that enables “preparedness.” We can “tweet” our way through any day and be up-to-the-minute aware of what people precious to us may be doing at any given moment. We can be texting messages that matter. A great many of them likely do not, but we can be texting nonetheless.

I-pod, I-pad, smart phone, blackberry and new “apps” are tools that we can use to be ready, up-to-date, and right on time for just about anything. Stock market status, weather reports, radar image of what clouds may be coming our way, what may be on special at a favorite store in the mall—the information on the arrival can be obtained with just a click of the mouse or a tap on the screen. We can be so very “ready.” We can Google the earth!

But when it comes to Advent and Christmas, perhaps if we are not so ready we can thank God for the condition.

Jesus is still a surprise. Jesus still comes to us when we are not ready, just waiting. Hope comes, not when we are ready for it, but when we need it most. Love comes to us not when we are ready for it, but when we need it most. Salvation comes to us not when we are ready for it and have planned for its arrival, but when we need it most.

The season is here again. Preparations are underway. But in terms of the advent of Jesus in my life, in terms of the essence of the good tidings of great joy, I am *never* ready; just *grateful* that the Savior comes.



New Group Meets to Plan

Adopt-A-Family, camping retreats, paintball, basketball games, discussion of current events, text support group, music, movies and just hanging out together—these are just some of the activity ideas generated by the teens who attended the November kick-off meeting of our High School Youth Group. This exciting new program, under the leadership of Dawn and Fred McElrath (see above), will provide opportunities for spiritual growth, mission, recreation and fellowship. All youth in grades 9–12 are welcome! This group meets at 11am Sunday mornings in the second-floor classroom at the top of the stairway near the Chapel.

Deadline for the next
Outlook issue is
Monday, December 12, 2011, 12 PM
outlook@churchinthecircle.com