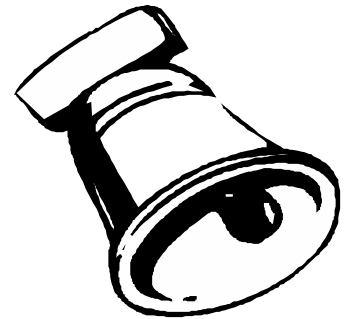




Christ United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 710
Levelland, TX 79336

THE BELL RINGER

January 2023



COMING IN JANUARY

Tuesdays, January 3, 17 & 31 – Grief Support Group at 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 1 – Epiphany of the Lord Sunday/Imagine No Malaria Sunday (online worship)

Monday, January 2 – Office Closed for New Years

Friday, January 6 – Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday, January 8 – Baptism of the Lord/Shared Ministries Sunday/Church Council Meeting

Sunday, January 15 – Second Sunday After the Epiphany/Human Relations Day

Monday, January 16 – Office closed in honor of Martin Luther King's Birthday

Sunday, January 22 – Third Sunday After the Epiphany

Thursday, January 26 – UMCOR materials due by noon

Friday, January 27 – End of Year Statistical Reports Due

Sunday, January 29 – Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany

Happy
New
Year

January Birthdays – Brenda Clanton-Jan. 1, Liz Brandt – Jan. 6, K.W. Hill- Jan. 17, Virginia Yarbrough – Jan. 26,
Tiah Taylor – Jan.29, Ross Joplin - Jan. 30

January Anniversaries –Neil & Frannie Guthrie – Jan. 31

Thank you

We have reached our
Shared Ministries goal for 2022

January Shared Ministries Sunday

Churches in the Northwest Texas Conference of the UMC will not be required to submit shared ministries payments for 2023. If you wish to designate giving for shared Ministries, you may do so. The money will be kept until needed when shared ministries payments resume.

Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet at 12:30 p.m. January 8th following the shared ministries lunch. A vote will be taken concerning a decision to participate or not participate in a vote to disaffiliate.

UMCOR Hygiene Kits

Please pick up information sheet in the Narthex. Deadline for turning in UMCOR materials will be noon, Thursday January 26th.

A Word from the Pastor

Dear Loyal Saints,

On January 24, 1972, Japanese soldier Shoichi Yokoi was captured by two farmers on the island of Guam after he had lived in seclusion since the Japanese army had had been driven out by U.S. forces in 1944. At first, he and nine other soldiers had retreated into the jungle and hills to avoid surrendering to the U. S. army. For years they survived by eating wild vegetation, eels, rats, toads and other vermin. They would also steal cattle when possible from local farmers.

In 1964, Shoichi was left alone when the last of

his fellow soldiers died. When he was discovered by accident in 1972, he tried to attack the two farmers and take their rifles away from them. Because of his weakened state they were able to subdue him and take him to local authorities. His story of being reunited with family and his country is a compelling one. Imagine appearing suddenly from the past in the world of 1972. Shoichi maintained that he and his fellow soldiers believed that they had a duty to uphold their vow as a soldier and to wait for orders from the high command as to what they should do. They were faithful to their calling, albeit in the eyes of history a misguided one.

We Christians are in much the same boat as Shoichi Yokoi. Our Lord left and ascended into heaven. Certainly this was not a retreat as in the Japanese retreat from Guam, but Christians in the early church were left in a hostile environment to wait for the return of Jesus.

Throughout his period of survival on Guam, Shoichi never considered surrender. He was captured when he let his guard down and failed to maintain his cover. He would have died in the jungle if it had not been for the accidental encounter with two farmers.

A message we can glean from this story is one of inspiration. We are surviving in a world in which our savior is yet to return. We survive in a world composed of enemies of our Lord. Unlike Shoichi, we are not secluded from a foreign world, we are immersed in it. This makes our survival as Christians even more difficult than that of Shoichi. No, we are not surviving on rats and toads, but daily we face the onslaught of forces and events which would undermine our Christian faith. Shoichi survived insurmountable illness during his survival, vowing that he would not let his family or his nation down.

In Psalm 119:92 we read the following: If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction. Like Shoichi Yokoi, we hold to our faithful belief that we will be taken home. As Christians, we wait for the return of Jesus and our being taken up into heaven on the last day. In the meantime, our Lord's commands are our delight and are what keep us going. Without them we would perish.

What keeps us going? I pray that we patiently and forthrightly live each day with the understanding that we will once again be reunited with our Lord despite the slings and arrows of our lives here and now.

Source: www.smithsonianmag.com

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Dennis