From the Pastor

The holiday season is now upon us. By the time you read this article, those who have celebrated a traditional Thanksgiving will be pretty tired of leftover turkey, the “Black Friday” shopping will be over, and the endless stream of Cyber Monday sales will be on our consciousness. Christmas will be just a few weeks away.

As I am entering this same time period with you as your pastor, I am also entering the end of my first half of a year with First Church, Huntington. I cannot believe that this much time has passed.

I am quite happy to be celebrating this Christmas with every single one of you and my prayers through the Christmas season will be for the following:

“...that we have a “holy” Christmas celebration as both a community of faith and in our respective families.” Holy is often a misunderstood word. The definition of the word is simple: “dedicated or consecrated to God”. When I say that I am praying for a Holy Christmas, I simply mean that I am hoping that all of our celebrations will be filled with acknowledgment that we do them knowing that Jesus is first and foremost on our minds. Trees, songs, presents, dinners, and all that go along with our celebration of this season do not need to be put aside in order for us to have a holy Christmas— they simply need to be dedicated to Someone bigger than ourselves. (This is one of many reasons I do not have a problem with anyone wishing me “Happy Holidays” during this season. The word “holiday” has at its root the very thing I want to do during the season—to celebrate the “holy”.) “That we will find some way to share the special meaning of Christmas for us with those who do not yet know the Good News of this season.” It is so easy to go through this busy time of our year and not notice the people that surround us who are looking for “life after life” (to borrow the words of Shane Clairborne) instead of “life after death.” When we are celebrating this season, I pray that we will be aware that there are so many around us that are just trying to get by and we will invite them to be a part of what we have set aside for God. Let them know that there is a place for them this Christmas among the people of God just as God let that be known to the shepherds of the first Christmas. “That you will experience anew the true love of God that is shown in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.” Sometimes it is easy to forget that the choice Jesus made to come and dwell among us as both fully human and fully divine is a choice that changes the entire world. One of the greatest things about our faith as Christians is this affirmation of God’s creation of humanity that is found in the Incarnation. God chose to dwell among us and still chooses to do so in our hearts and lives today. These will be the basis for my times of daily prayer throughout the Advent season and I invite you to join me in these prayers.

May God richly bless you this Christmas.

Pastor Scott

Advent Sermon Series

During the season of Advent this year, Pastors Scott and Steve will be preaching a series of sermons titled “A Place Just for You This Christmas” with a different theme for each “place” during each week of the season. This will culminate with our Christmas Eve Celebrations at 4:00 pm and 11:00 pm on Christmas Eve.

December 1 – Isaiah 2:1-5 “A Place for Hope”
December 8 – Isaiah 11:1-10 “A Place for Peace”
December 15 – Matthew 11:2-11 “A Place for Joy”
along with our Choir Cantata
December 22 – Matthew 1:18-35 “A Place for Love”
December 24 – Luke 2:1-20 “A Place Just for You This Christmas”

Worship Opportunities on Christmas Eve

4:00 pm
This service will be children and family friendly.

11:00 pm
Traditional Christmas Eve worship in the Sanctuary. Holy Communion, and the sharing of our Christmas candle lights The service will end as Christmas Day begins.
Getting Ready for the Season

Yard Signs Available—Let’s Invite People.

Our congregation is providing yard signs with our website listed on it for you to place in your yard to help invite people to our congregation during the Advent and Christmas season. We have about 80, single sided signs and frames to put them on. (Some of you may live in locations where double sided sign would be better, so we encourage you to get two.) These will be available for pick up following worship on December 1st.

Please take advantage of this advertising opportunity and let it spur your imagination to invite someone you know is looking for a “place” this Christmas.

“Concert of Carols” December 8

Everyone is invited to “Concert of Carols” presented by the Marshall University College of Music on Sunday evening December 8th at 7pm in the sanctuary of Johnson Memorial UMC. All of the Marshall choirs, plus the Wind Symphony will be featured in this presentation of holiday music. Several of our church members will be performing, including Linda Hay, Sara and Kenny Tschop and former pastor, Mark Conner; Debbie Bradley will be directing Choral Union. Choirs from Huntington, Spring Valley and Fairland High Schools will also be participating. You won’t want to miss this very special holiday event!

“Away In A Mango” Children’s Musical December 11

It’s almost time to pack your bags for the holiday cruise of a lifetime! You’ll see the beautiful Christmas Islands and other points south aboard the SS Mango! Departure is 6pm on December 11; we set sail right after dinner, in the fellowship hall. Don’t forget to make your reservation soon! Our cruise director will be on hand to ensure everyone has a fabulous trip which includes watching the famous musical, “Away In A Mango”, starring all the FUMC Wesley Kids. Don’t miss out on this wonderful excursion to Christmas Island! We’ll be taking up a collection at the conclusion of the cruise for a special Christmas mission, so bring your pocketbooks!

Attention Wesley Kids Choir

We sing for church on Sunday, December 8th at 10:45. Dress rehearsal for "Mango" is right after church, as soon as we eat lunch. Please let Susan Nickels know ASAP how many she’ll be feeding after church and plan to offer a donation. We’ll rehearse WITH COSTUMES until 2:30, using microphones, etc. Children should report to choir room by 5:30 on Wednesday, the 11th to get costumed and mic’ed. Thanks for all your help making this "cruise" a reality!

Debbie Bradley

Winter Weather Policy for Sundays and Wednesdays

With December comes the first day of winter and the potential of stormy weather. If the weather is questionable on Wednesdays, we will make a decision by 2:00 pm concerning whether or not we will meet for the Wednesday evening dinner and programs. We will post the announcement on the First Church Facebook page and call or text those who do not have access to Facebook.

Pastor Scott will be here on Sunday mornings, bad weather or not, so services will be held. Each person needs to make their own decision about braving the elements. Please be safe.
General Conference 2020
As many of you know, changes made at the Special General Conference in 2019 will be taking effect on January 1, 2020. These changes more clearly define “self-avowed, practicing homosexual” as it relates to ordination in the UMC, and puts into effect the first mandatory punishments for UMC pastors who preside at same-sex weddings.

General Conference will meet again in May of 2020 and many of the same topics will be discussed and decided upon again. Some proposal to completely restructure the UMC or split it altogether may also be considered. As the legislation that will be going to the floor of the General Conference becomes available, Pastor Scott WILL be holding multiple opportunities for people to gather and discuss the topics in a safe, Christian way. (These will be scheduled once legislation is available AND we have an idea how many sessions we will need to have.)

However, in order to attend these meetings, Pastor Scott is asking you to attend ONE of the prayer and preparation sessions that he will offer. These will take place in the sanctuary at 4:00 pm each Sunday in January. **Attendees to one of these prayer sessions and a commitment to pray for each other as we enter another General Conference period will be those invited to attend the discussion sessions offered later.**

First Church has gone live on YouTube.
Live streaming of the 10:45 service is now available for the times you can’t get to church. Go to www.youtube.com and search for First UMC Huntington. You can also access the live stream by going to our web site, www.firstunitedmethodist.com and click on the “More” button on the first page that loads (the one with the Resurrection Window). You can also find the link on our Facebook page.

“Happiness” Bible Study Begins January 8
Everybody wants to be happy. Everybody is on a happiness quest. For many, happiness is measured in moments. Experiences. It’s elusive. Unsustainable. What about you? What makes you happy? Something comes to mind for each of us.

Join us for our DVD study featuring Andy Stanley as we examine the ways in which we tend to define happiness and explains how that definition influences the way we pursue it.

Join us on **Wednesday evenings beginning January 8 at 6:00 in Room 208.**

Seekers Sunday School
Each month we will be featuring a brief description for each of our adult Sunday School classes. If you are not involved in a class, we hope this will help you find a place to visit. Sunday school meets every Sunday morning from 9:30-10:30.

The Seekers is a class for all ages. The class uses The Wired Word curriculum. The Wired Word uses current events from the news and relates it to the scripture, leading to thought-provoking discussion. The curriculum is different each week, but always current. The class has also offered some special studies including the just completed look at the book “X-Plan Parenting”.

Everyone is welcome. The Seekers Class meets in Room 208.

Men’s Group News
The next Men's breakfast will be December 14th. Same time same place. At this time there is not a program, so if anybody has an idea please contact me. The menu will be the same and I will solicit a potato casserole form someone.

Watch your email for the names and gifts needed for the Ebenezer Angels. We have 2 boys, both 3 years old. Spiderman seems to be the theme.

See you on the 14th. As usual come early for coffee and fellowship.

Family Fellowship/Game Night
**Sunday, January 26, 4-7 pm**
Food and fun for the whole family
Come to a game night to shake off the winter blahs. Bring your favorite board games to play plus an appetizer to share. This event is for all ages. We will meet at 4:00 in the Fellowship Hall.
In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Eternal God! Grant us gratitude enough to look backward and be thankful; courage enough to look forward and be hopeful; faith enough to look upward and be humble; kindness enough to look outward and be helpful. Together let us pray...

For those who are sick or homebound...


December Birthdays

12/1  Trinity Casto
12/4  Jennifer Niemann
12/5  Andrew Canterbury
12/6  Susan Wylie
12/7  Leah O’Roark
12/8  Joey Bacon
12/10  Allie Bright
12/11  Carter Matthews
12/12  Richard Drown
12/17  Paige Cruz
12/18  Jack Welch
12/19  Quentin Neighborgall
12/20  Ken Bannon
12/21  Joyce Ray
12/22  Pam McCoy
12/23  Linda Eddins

January Birthdays

1/3  GinnyLee Hastings
1/6  Levi Krantz
1/11  Jacob Eddins
1/13  Sarah Thomas
1/15  Tina Goings
1/17  John Archambault
1/19  Jay Shepherd
1/20  Sarah Young
1/23  Jack Patrick
1/25  Wes Shan holster
1/30  Alex Hagan
1/31  Emily Tschop

Welcome new members Roger and Peggy Woollard who joined on November 10. They live at 30 Keeling Dr., Hurricane WV 25526.

Dorcas Circle

Christmas Luncheon

The Dorcas Circle will meet for lunch on December 10 at 12:30 at Le Bistro. Anyone needing transportation should contact Alice Stone.

It’s Cookie Time!

It is time for our annual Cookie Walk. On Sunday, December 15, immediately after morning worship, you will have the opportunity to stock up on yummy Christmas cookies and other goodies. But don’t be late. They will be gone in a miraculous 20 minutes.

How does this happen? If we have lots of volunteer cookie bakers, it is very little work for all. So, all you good cooks out there, dig out your favorite holiday recipes and bake up a 6-dozen batch of goodies. Then, bring them on December 15, pick up an empty box and fill it with a wide variety of everybody else’s cookies. After you fill your box it is weighed and you pay $6.00 a pound. All proceeds go to the Missions of United Methodist Women.

Warmed and Fed Campaign

Cridlin Food and Clothing Pantry is having a “Warmed and Fed” Campaign from now through December 31. Through this campaign you can help provide a new coat and nutritional food for someone in need. A $20 donation will buy a new coat; donations of any amount toward food are welcome. Please make checks payable to Christian Associates and mailed to them at PO Box 595, Huntington WV 25701.

Brrrrr!

Don’t forget the Mitten Tree!

Bring warmth to those who need it by filling the mitten tree with hats, mittens, hats and scarves. They will be distributed to those in need at Cridlin and Ebenezer.
Seasonal Fun!
Here are some puzzles and activities for you and your family to enjoy.

Puzzle!
Unscramble the Christmas-themed words below, writing each extra letter on the blank to the right. Then place those extra letters in the correct spots below to discover what we receive at Christmas.

1. TGLBEHHEME
2. NEAGLO
3. NRMEDAG
4. ODEKSNY
5. AMGYR
6. OHEJSJIP
7. EFJUSS
8. ITEEINMSW
9. SPHIDSREEO
10. EMCFAI
11. TLSRA
12. CSSNUEO
13. HEVSPE
14. ENIN

Light the Way
Make some Christmas candles to remember Jesus, the Light of the World.

What you need:
- Unlined white notecards
- Hot glue (and adult help)
- Yellow tissue paper
- Mini muffin liners
- Clothespins

What you do:
1. Roll a notecard from side to side into a “candle” tube. Secure with glue.
2. Insert a piece of tissue paper “flame” in one end.
3. Glue the other end to a muffin liner. Then glue the liner to a clothespin.
4. Repeat to make many paper candles. Pin them to the branches of a Christmas tree.

Symbols of the Season
Many traditional decorations convey the meaning of Christmas.

shepherd’s staff

Answer: candy cane, evergreen, star, bulbs, bell, wreath.

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. 2 Corinthians 9:15, 16.
Senior Pastor,
Scott Sears

Associate Pastor
Stephen Hensley

Director of Christian Education
Schauna Chambers

Sunday Worship Opportunities
First Light  8:45 a.m.
Sunday School  9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship  10:45 a.m.
Korean Church  1:00 p.m.

Next Tower Topics Deadline is January 27

Worship Opportunities on Christmas Eve

4:00 pm
This service will be children and family friendly.

11:00 pm
Traditional Christmas Eve worship in the Sanctuary. Holy Communion, and the sharing of our Christmas candle lights The service will end as Christmas Day begins.