



LEBANON

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

creating a place at the table for everyone

Through the Red Doors

What's happening inside, outside, and through Lebanon UMC



Advent series:
Mary's perspective on the birth of Jesus

To any young, unmarried, peasant woman, the coming of God's presence on earth in the life of a human child would be life-changing. But for his mother, that change is so much more. Could Mary have possibly grasped how her life, and the life of all the world, was about to change?

The God who lifts up the lowly and brings justice for the oppressed also draws the weary and outcast into the closest circle of blessing. God also uses the lowly, the weary, the oppressed and the outcast to accomplish God's very presence in the world. No one *knows* this better than Mary. This Advent, we will walk in her sandals for a while, pondering what God's coming might mean, exalting that God lifts up and transforms the world, and wondering at how that means God can use us.

Did Mary know that God could use even her in powerful ways? Did she know that Jesus was more than a remarkable child? Did she know that grace and love would conquer the social stigmas of her life, and would overcome the greatest pain and loss she would ever know?

I think she had an inkling. Do we?

Holy Holidays?

Reflections on the Season by Cally L.

This is a difficult time of year for me. Piles of wet leaves, dead flower stalks, bedraggled plants, and rotting pumpkins all remind me of the promises of spring and summer that were not fulfilled. And I know it's going to get worse. The nights will get longer and colder. Snow. Sleet. Ice. Freezing rain. All enlivened by the holidays.

Thanksgiving – family traditions that no-one likes but without which the meal isn't complete. Awful rolls. The pie that tastes like cardboard. I want a Norman Rockwell dinner, but his family doesn't show up. Mine does. I love these people. But as time goes by, I have less and less in common with them.

But Thanksgiving's challenge to my social skills is nothing to what Christmas does to my serenity. Setting aside those huge snowman balloons that I want to stab with a knitting needle and send into the stratosphere, and the wretched little drummer boy, and all the "good will" proclaimed by merchants who just want me to buy, buy, buy, Advent is difficult for me as a historian and a biologist.

continued p. 2

CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Advent Celebration
Friday, 12/8, 5:30 pm

Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 17

Longest Night (Blue Christmas) Service, Wed.
December 20, 7 pm

Christmas Eve Family Service: 12/24, 7 pm

Christmas Eve communion service: 11 pm

Reflections on the Season

There are so many questions. Questions that don't affect my faith, but seriously disturb me. The census requiring Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem but which left no record in Roman records – and if there was one thing the Romans were good about, it was record keeping. How many wise men? What happened to the gold frankincense and myrrh? Certainly a poor Jewish family could have used them! And that star business. The slaughter of the innocents? Why only in one gospel? And how did Herod manage to miss the angelic choirs singing in fields only a few miles from his palace? And why do we celebrate Christ's birth in December, when the shepherds were certainly NOT in the field watching over their flocks, but when the Romans were engaging in their

rowdiest festival (Saturnalia involved lots of wine, lots of nakedness, and lots of what we would call – at best – bad behavior. My Celtic ancestors, dancing around a fire on the longest night, clad only in blue paint, would have been scandalized)?

These are my issues. I'm sure you each have your own list. With only minor variations, mine at least will be back next year.

When I think about the most memorable events of the holiday seasons of my life, however, they share a common trait: they are low key and simple. My father reading the Christmas story from Luke. A candle lighting. Watching the snow fall. The one time the turkey really did come out on time, looking like a Norman Rockwell turkey. My aunt's quiet approval of my first pumpkin pie.

The new puppy curled up in my lap. Finally finding the perfect present for my son-in-law. The grandsons asleep in the boxes their presents came in. Leftovers. A walk.

We all know where and how the life whose beginning we celebrate so cheerfully and extravagantly will end. And it's not a pretty picture. But I need to remember the cross, because without the cross and the resurrection, there would be no Christianity. I, at least, need to let go of all my complaints in order to focus on the joy of being in on a wonderful secret, the birth of a baby who changed the course of human history in ways his contemporaries could never have imagined, and who is changing it still, both in ways we can see and in ways which we cannot imagine.

News from the Camp Booster



So what's going on with the camp program you ask? Since we are coming into the winter season things have slowed down a bit. We do have fundraising opportunities coming up in December and January. We receive 10% of the food sales, this

money goes toward church camp scholarships. We would love to have your help at our Dartmouth hockey concessions on **December 9th** and **January 26th**. 8 people are needed per game, it is a fun, fast paced time. Please let me know if you can help out, especially in January.

Wanakee Methodist Camp in Meredith has scheduled a high School (9th -12th grade) retreat for **February 2-4, 2018**. Registration is open at wanakee.org. Many outdoor activities as well as indoor activities are planned for the weekend! Tell the youth in your life about this retreat!

The Hedstrom Camp Scholarship Fund is available for a high school student interested in a summer camp scholarship at Wanakee. Anyone can contribute to this fund, it's another way to financially support our young campers. Donations to the fund can be made directly through the church.

Please let me know if you have any questions about Wanakee or our other camps in the New England Conference.

See ya round the campfire,

Amy N.
Camp Booster