

Mid-Week Reflections
November 22, 2017

Coming Up:

Today: Wednesday, Nov. 22nd - *Echoes articles are due.*

Breakthrough House T-day dinner prep in SHUMC kitchen begins at 5:30. Contact Kris Denton or Natalie Copeland to be involved in this very important work.

Thursday, Nov. 23rd - *Thanksgiving*

Breakthrough House prep continues starting at 8:00am at SHUMC and food will be transported for serving which is at 11:00.

Sunday, Nov. 26th - **First Sunday of Advent**

Memory Tree Ornaments will be hung on the sanctuary tree as part of worship. Also, for the third year, ornaments will be given to the children during Children's Time. Additionally we will offer thanks to Janice Cordry for her faithful work with us for the past five years. Cards of gratitude from you would be very appropriate.

Thoughts About Us:

Another Church Conference, our annual all church meeting, was completed on Sunday afternoon. Pastors and members of Lecompton UMC, Big Springs UMC, Stull UMC, Berryton UMC, Tecumseh UMC and SHUMC were present. Our District Superintendent, Rev. Kay Scarbrough led us in a brief time of worship and a time to consider how we will likely be structured to function more effectively and faithfully in the future.

Here is the introductory paragraph of a handout we received. "The Great Plains Conference is establishing a supervised system of networks to accomplish our unified mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This configuration puts the emphasis firmly on the mission field as churches in a network collaborate to address the ministry needs within their contexts."

Exactly what that means remains to be seen. From what I am hearing it is very likely we will be "networked" with the other churches that were present at SHUMC on Sunday. Again quoting from the handout, here are the listed *Expected Outcomes*. "--Develop measurable spiritual growth in congregations through increased discipleship practices in worship, small group participation, evangelism, stewardship and missional engagement. --Provide encouragement for congregational and pastoral leadership.---Develop and achieve a higher level of leadership and

collaboration between laity and clergy. ----Experience the strength and relationship of our Wesleyan connection."

So the hope is that together, and by holding one another accountable, each congregation will be able to do what they had not been able to do, or had not shown evidence of accomplishing in the recent past. What we do and how we do it will be up to the churches that comprise the "network." Again, what that will be remains to be seen. We will work to be strategic and intentional about what we do and who we serve as we focus on growing disciples.

Enough of that. What I observed Sunday evening and what I experience as your pastor most days was a good and faithful spirit coming from all the Shawnee Heights folks who gathered. We are in a good place right now. We are, if you will, at a moment of "catching our breath" so we can begin the race again. We are healthy. SHUMC is stable and many of you are actively participating in worship and on-going mission projects. However, as anyone who claims to be healthy knows, we could be better.

We needed some time to rest and recover and regain strength. In many ways I have come to understand that is what these two and a half years of serving you have been about. Even when we disagree, even when an aging facility and a temperamental septic system demands our attention, even when beloved members die and others move to far-away places they now call home, we continue to be who God is calling us to be. We love one another and work to show that love to those we barely know...if at all. We do so because God loves us and empowers us to be God's love. What I say to you each week at the end of worship, I firmly believe. "Go and be God's love and peace in a world that so desperately needs it."

The great joy is we get to do this together. We get to ponder and pray and work to grow ever closer to God and bring others with us. For all of that and much more, I give God thanks on this day before Thanksgiving. But really, this is not the only moment to reflect and remember who God is and what God is calling us to become. Advent, our waiting for Jesus again, is a wonderful time to remember that. Do take care of yourselves. Don't get caught up in all of the demands for your time and energy and resources. Take care of you by reading scripture, praying, and being in worship. That is how we gain and regain our strength to serve God.

Sunday, we will hang our special ornaments on our "MEMORY TREE." Bring as many as you like and fill out a card with the names of those you are remembering. Again, I will hang an ornament that was on my tree when I was a child to honor my mom. It always makes me smile as I hang it and think, "There you go, Mom, you can watch me work from there." Additionally John and I hang special ornaments for his parents, my parents-in-love.

Know I will be praying for you as many of you travel, some entertain family and guests, and most of us will grieve the loss of those who are no longer sitting around our tables, or who are unable to be with us this particular year. In the midst of it all, may we continue to find the great joy of this life. May we celebrate the shared journey. May we remain confident of God's love for us all...and may we each be filled, not just with turkey and pie,

but with God's loving transformational Spirit.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Blessings,

Barb