

# WELLS & SPRING

A Publication of Wells Church

A United Methodist Congregation

November 2023

## Count Your Blessings, One by One

By Chris Cumbest  
Pastor

November is upon us and with it comes the fullness of fall and the kick off of the holiday season. It is and always has been a time of deep reflection and special memories for me.



Cumbest

Times of reflection come for me as we pause to celebrate the lives of those who are no longer with us on All Saints Day, during a time of recognition of our veterans on Veterans Day and in celebrating with family around the Thanksgiving table.

Those moments occur as I am prompted each year to reflect on the past year in ministry through my response to the Pastor's Report at our annual Charge Conference and in the memories of my family's annual days of syrup-making. Each of these experiences carry their own memories as well as opportunities to reflect, evaluate and reorient my life as I journey through this month and season of life.

For some reason, this is the season of the year and the month that my soul always feels most connected with my parents and other close family members. This was the time of year that my mom who always sang or whistled as she went about her day would change her tune to the hymn "Count

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WellsFest Co-Chairs Charles Araujo and Anne Karges, along with Wells Pastor Chris Cumbest, present a check for \$40,095.07 to Operation Shoestring's Executive Director Robert Langford and Administrative Director Vanessa Green. The presentation also included a beautiful painting by artist Sunny Eide depicting Operation Shoestring's programs for children.

## WellsFest Proceeds Go to Support Shoestring's Work

Operation Shoestring began in the basement of Wells Church more than 55 years ago and has since become one of Jackson's most important nonprofits serving children and families.

On Oct. 22, Wells was able to support that long-running partnership of service to children and families with a check for \$40,095.07, which represents all of the proceeds from WellsFest 2023.

Shoestring Executive Director Robert Langford thanked Wells for the gift and for the ministry partnership that Shoestring and Wells shares in the central Jackson area.

"I guess you can come home again," he said. "I would say that not only is this

building our spiritual home in so many ways, but I think this neighborhood is Wells' and Shoestring's spiritual home. I think that continuing to look for those opportunities to celebrate our values to build God's Kingdom in this neighborhood is the opportunity and challenge before us together — for us at Operation Shoestring and for this really amazing congregation. Thank you for all you have done for a long, long time."

The funds will support Shoestring's after-school and summer programs for neighborhood children as well as wellness and health-equity work with their parents. In its 39 years, WellsFest has raised more than \$1.5 million to support the work of area nonprofits.



# NOVEMBER

## BIRTHDAYS

- Nov. 1 Jeff Jennings, Tina Jennings
- Nov. 2 Francine Reynolds
- Nov. 3 Liz Brandon, James Mason, Ron Permenter
- Nov. 4 Michelle Shrader
- Nov. 5 Lynn Forsythe
- Nov. 6 Pam Johnson, Gwen McGowan, Reagann Norquist, Amanda Ringer-Pigott
- Nov. 8 Kathi Acy, Mark Butler, Foster Wilburn
- Nov. 11 Linda Pilgrim, Will Spell
- Nov. 12 Mark Fields
- Nov. 13 Sharon Butler, Jane Everly, Anthony Tonkel Puckett
- Nov. 15 Ian Watson, Charles Williams
- Nov. 17 Ruby Tobias
- Nov. 19 Katherine Perkins, Tom Sheffield, Glen Gates Taylor
- Nov. 20 Dani Jennings Campeau
- Nov. 21 Rusty Perkins
- Nov. 22 Hunter Farmer Campbell, Craig Orgeron
- Nov. 23 Jill Conner Browne, Michael McDuff, Me'ah Moreno
- Nov. 24 Rose Casano, Richard Campbell
- Nov. 25 Kasen Johnson
- Nov. 26 Peggy Hampton, Chris Cumbest, Hans Schrock
- Nov. 27 Bill Latham, Richard Bedi
- Nov. 28 Deborah Blakeney

If your birthday is in November and isn't listed here, please let us know.

## 2023 Wells Church Giving

Jan. \$47,035.00	July \$48,808.08
Feb. \$30,860.00	Aug. \$32,155.00
March \$42,799.00	Sept. \$36,030.00
April \$34,662.00	Oct.
May \$61,178.00	Nov.
June \$37,123.00	Dec.

Based on the 2023 budget, \$56,983 is needed monthly to support operations and ministries of the church.

## Count Your Blessings

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Your Blessings.” Oftentimes it was sung during times when we didn’t feel very blessed, but mom would sing it for us to remind us of the importance of all that God had done for us, and to not concentrate on what we may not have at the time.

*“Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings see what God has done. Count your blessings — name them one by one. Count your many blessings see what God has done.”* Mom would sing and we would be reminded to remember that though we didn’t have much, we had enough and that God would supply our needs.

November seems to always offer an opportunity for me to truly pause long enough to reflect on my life’s journey, give thanks and reorient myself for what lies ahead in the year to come.

As I reflect on our past year together, I certainly feel blessed to have continued the journey with you here at Wells. It is a true gift for me to be able to serve a community that lives out the mission of loving, caring and sharing in such visible ways. What a blessing it has been to live into our relationships with the community and organizations we have shared long-term relationships with — Galloway Elementary, Good Samaritan, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation and Operation Shoestring, to name a few. What a blessing it has been to try new things this year as well.

At The Table, WellsFest Cares, a streamlined Wellsfest and the sermon series on Jimmy Buffett come to mind.

The year has truly been a blessing, but it hasn’t come without its challenges as well. We continue to see the need to work toward encouraging persons to give so that we may continue to sustain the ministries that we share. We acknowledge the shortfall in this area and are working diligently to help others see the importance of what we do so that “money will follow purpose.”

Our Finance Committee and Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee are also working diligently to help look at how we may need to make some shifts and changes that will help us be in line with where we are financially, as well.

We certainly welcome suggestions and gifts as we continue this journey.

So, as I pause and reflect, I count my blessings and give thanks.

I thank God for you! I thank God for the continuing journey. I thank God for the many blessings that have come through the relationships that I have been privileged to share.

What are you thankful for?

As you count your blessings, what is it that you can name “one by one”?

Count your blessings!

**Write Chris at**  
**chriscombust@wellschurch.org.**

## Wells Memorial United Methodist Church Staff

Chris Cumbest, Pastor | Sue Keen Hyland, Associate Pastor

Chuck Reynolds  
Choir Director

Ashley Rogers  
Children’s Ministry Director

Elaine Collins  
Nursery Coordinator

Dr. Jeff Parker  
Minister of Counseling

Jamie Ward  
Accompanist

Loy Moncrief  
Landscape Supervisor

Jane Everly  
Pastoral Assistant

David Hampton  
Pastoral Assistant

Kay Olliver  
Treasurer

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# Confirmation Class Planned

By Ashley Rogers  
Children's Director

*"Her father told her, 'What you promise when you are confirmed is not that you will believe this forever. What you promise when you are confirmed is that this is the story you will wrestle with forever.'" — Rachel Held Evans, Searching for Sunday*



Rogers

One of my favorite United Methodist milestones is confirmation. In the United Methodist Church, confirmation is the time when a person (usually grades 6-12) publicly professes their faith and intention to live out the vows made for them at their baptism, thereby becoming a full member of their church. In short, it's a young person's decision to take responsibility for their faith journey with the love and support of a congregation. It's a really big, awesome deal!

In January, Rev. Sue and I will be leading a confirmation class for any young person who wishes to explore whether this is the right step for them. The process usually entails a few mini-retreats at the church and an overnight weekend retreat with other youth. After classes, discussions, mentoring, and as many questions as they have, the young person decides whether or not to be confirmed into the church at Wells. In mid-May, we will have a church-wide Confirmation Sunday during which these youth will be recognized.

If there is a young person in your life who is interested, please let me know! If any adults who have never joined Wells are interested in a similar experience, we can make that happen as well. In the meantime, please be in prayer for our young people as they begin this awesome new chapter of Christian faith.

Write Ashley at  
[ashleyrogers@wellschurch.org](mailto:ashleyrogers@wellschurch.org).

## Love Thy Neighbor Bob

By Dr. Jeff Parker, Minister of Counseling

Recently, a man I don't know unintentionally witnessed to me. As is often the case, words were not necessary. I'd never met him before and I'd never talked to him.



Parker

I say I don't know him, which is true, but I knew of him because he's a next-door neighbor of my daughter's family. And what I knew of him was based on him advertising certain views that I viscerally disagree with. He would come up from time to time in conversations with my daughter and under cover of humor I'd taken to referring to him in a somewhat derisive way as "Neighbor Bob." I insulated myself from seeing this as judgmental and unloving.

What I had done is let the little I knew about him from outward appearances obscure the fact that Bob is a three-dimensional person, and that like any two Children of God, we are much more alike than different. Also, as Children of God, we are loved and offered Grace without favor.

So, I was enjoying an evening with my two grandsons, Eli, and Cameron, and I heard an insistent knock on the basement door. I went to answer and a man was there holding a pan covered with cellophane. He asked for my son-in-law Richard and when I told him he and Sarah were away for the weekend celebrating their wedding anniversary, he shook his head in disappointment, saying he'd made a dessert treat for them and had hoped to get it to them before they left. He told me I might as well eat it. I asked him his name and he said he was the next-door neighbor Bob.

I was convicted in that moment, feeling ashamed, small and hypocritical. A man I'd judged from a distance and used for what I intended as humor had out-loved me.

God bless him!

I doubt he has the slightest idea that he did what most sermons and Prayers of Confession could never do: His kind gesture had pierced my self-image and shone a light on a sin I've tolerated. Our favorite sins are the ones we think others have and we don't, aren't they?

Matthew 7:1-2 says, *"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."*

**Prayer:** *"Thank you, Lord, for Bob — for his kindness, and for showing me what I needed to see at a time when I was vulnerable to seeing it. Help us always to look for the best in others and in the embrace of grace give us a convicting awareness of the worst in ourselves."*

Write Jeff at [drjparker@comcast.net](mailto:drjparker@comcast.net).

Electronic Service Requested

# November 2023

## Let's Prepare to Prepare for Advent

**By Sue Keen Hyland**  
**Associate Pastor**

Have you noticed that the weather has been just a touch cooler?



Hyland

Look around town and you'll see pumpkins and fall decor at almost every business. I even think that a few leaves are beginning to turn. Each year as the fall greets us, I begin preparing my heart and my mind for the things that will fill my calendar during the last three months of the year.

There are football games, the Mississippi State Fair and Halloween parties, then we mosey right along into November and that's when the craziness really hits. Thanksgiving comes along and then "BAM!" Advent is here.

As the preacher who has been known to kickoff the Advent season by preaching in her pajamas, as much as I'd like to deny it, I am never truly prepared for Advent.

I've gotten so caught up in the business and fun of the fall, that Advent and Christmas always seem to sneak up on me, leaving me out of breath and running for the rest of the year. But what if this year we all did something different? It's only November. Surely, we can begin our Advent season this year a little more prepared, if we start now. I am not saying to start your shopping or put your Christmas tree up. What if we truly took the time over the next few weeks to prepare our hearts for what advent might bring.

Advent is a season of preparation, and it never hurts to pre-prepare...does

it? If I am really honest, my heart needs adjusting before Thanksgiving anyway.

How might you prepare to prepare this holiday season?

Who is God calling you to see and be during the last few months of the year? Where is God calling you to go? What is God calling you to do?

How might this season look different if we decide today to align our hearts and our minds with God's? I believe that we just might be ready for Advent after all.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and God's righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu, alleluia."

**Write Sue at**  
**[suehyland@wellschurch.org](mailto:suehyland@wellschurch.org)**