

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church

Hope

Christmas means a lot of things. According to our Advent banners it means: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. For this article, let's look at hope.

Christmas is filled with hopes – some are deep and meaningful, some less so. Stores hope that Christmas will be a strong selling season and that they will make money. Children hope that they will get the toy they asked Santa for. Members of the military may hope that they can be home with their families. Charities and churches hope that the generosity of the season will rub off and that people will give to their cause. Pastors hope that the church pews will be full. Cats hope that you will look the other way long enough for them to climb the Christmas tree. And the angels sing of their hope that peace will reign on earth and there will be goodwill among us all. Christmas is truly a time “when the hopes and fears of all the years are met”.

As I was reflecting upon this Advent season, I ran across this quote which has been attributed to St. Augustine, St. Ignatius but it is unlikely either of them actually said it.

***Pray as if everything depends upon God;
work as if everything depends upon You.***

I decided that that is a great definition of hope. It is an admission that part of what we hope for is beyond our control. There are things that we simply have to let God take care of. But it also believes that we have a role in bringing about that which we hope for.

In Douglas Anthony Goodman's book, *The Hope Dealer*, he tells a story: “I remember my preacher telling the story about a little girl that was upset about her brother catching birds in

a trap. She was a little upset about that and she said, ‘I have been praying that you won't catch any more birds.’ He just laughed at her. One morning she made an announcement that God had answered her prayers. He said, ‘what do you mean by that?’ She said, ‘God answered my prayers. I prayed that you would not catch any more birds in that trap.’ He said, ‘what do you mean? What are you saying? I'm not going to catch any more birds?’ She said, ‘no, because last night I smashed all the traps.’”

Okay so maybe that is a little extreme. But you get the point. Often when we take something to God in prayer, the thing that is changed is not the situation we want changed; instead, we ourselves are changed. We become motivated to work to bring about that which we are praying for. Yet, we also admit that not everything we work for happens. There are times when despite our best efforts, we fail to gain that which we hoped for. And it is then we return, yet again to prayer and place it in God's hands. | *Pastor Rob*

Questions for reflection:

1. ***This Advent Season what is your greatest hope?***
2. ***What steps can you take toward working toward making it happen?***
3. ***What do you have to leave in the hands of God?***

Prayer: God, we are a people of many hopes. You have given us those hopes for a reason. May we pursue the ones which are good and right and beautiful with all our efforts. And may your grace, power, and strength bring them to reality. Amen.

Choosing Joy During the Journey

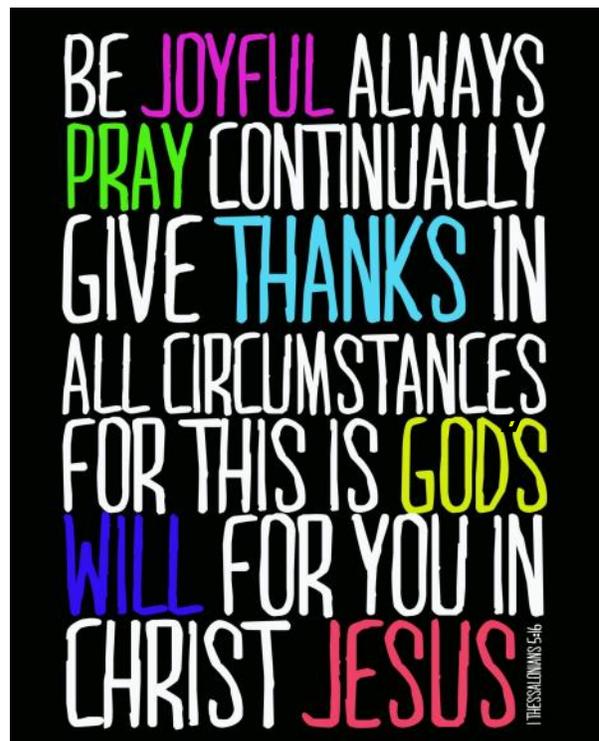
We made it! We're here! We've finally arrived! These kinds of statements can be used in many situations. Sometimes, especially around the holidays, they can be used to celebrate reaching our destination after that long drive to a relative's home for dinner. Or they can also be used to mark the completion of anything that's taken a while or can be hard to get through – whether that is a construction project, a marathon race, a disease, or a big move. Whatever the circumstance, these statements exclaim that we've gotten through something or reached our goal. As I thought more about this, along with some recent stories I've heard from others, I found myself wondering about how we handle not the goal itself, but rather the journey to the goal.

As I sat in church the other day, I wrote this note: “Do we remember the daily moments once we reach our goal, and how do we embrace those moments during our journey?” I was thinking about how we might sometimes focus so much on the goal itself that we forget to enjoy the journey to it. A small-scale example of this could be the typical holiday gathering – the lists are made for the grocery items, the extra chairs are pulled out, the shopping is done, and the cleaning completed all while putting our focus on the one main day we're working toward. And then when that day finally arrives (the one we've been focusing so much on) we may find that we spent so much time working at it, that when it's finally here, we wonder why we don't feel the joy we expected. But did we choose joy during the journey to get there? Just think of how many days there had been filled with moments shared with

those same loved ones and others before that 'big day'. But how many times did we overlook those who were with us because we were so rushed to meet our goal? How many moments did we just hurry through as we ran those errands, maybe even ignoring our children or grandchildren in the back seat because we were so focused on the 'big day'? Those are moments where joy can be. Awesome joy! We can choose joy in every moment. But too many times, possibly, we might focus more on the goal than on choosing joy during our journey to that goal.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 reminds us to *“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Through this season of Christmas, and throughout the year ahead, may we celebrate Jesus by choosing joy in all of our moments. | *Melodie Coles, Lay Leader*



Building Renovation Updates



Building Committee members in the new elevator. L-R: Kathy Nestorak, Jim Tesch, Barb Vallieu, John Ourensma, Melodie Coles, Pastor Rob McPherson, Jan Tesch, Sue Walter, and Renee' Nestorak. (Not Pictured): Craig Connor, Rick Piper, Sheri Piper, and Pastor Pat Brook.

Elevator Installation | As chair of the current Building Committee, I am writing to thank you for your ongoing support of this Capital Campaign and Renovation Project. We did it! We looked back and saw those who dreamed of where we are now, and we looked ahead to imagine what the future might be and might need. Our building is now poised for the next 175 years of ministry and is open and available to all. Thank you for your pledges of financial support, for your prayers, for your patience, and for your love of Christ that will be shown to all with whom we come in contact.

Please join in the dedication scheduled for ***Sunday, January 20, 2019.***

To all of you, and to all who served on the Capital Campaign and Building Committees, I personally want to say, "Job well done!"

Respectfully, Barb Vallieu

Steeple Replacement Project | The steeple replacement project is underway. Steel supports to hold the new steeple were installed by crane last month under the site supervision of Matt Taylor, P.E., from Foulke Construction.

The steel supports are necessary in order to accommodate the windloads that the new 40 foot steeple will have to withstand.

Additional work being considered during the steeple installation is the repair and reinforcement of the frame that allows for our 117 year old custom-made tower bell to continue to be rung by rope pull.

Weather permitting, the delivery and installation of the new steeple is scheduled for ***February 4, 2019.*** | Trustees



From the Director of Music

I'm excited about our annual Community Christmas Concert, to be held on **Sunday, December 9, at 4:00 pm!**

This year's program is anchored by an eight-movement cantata called *By Heaven's Light*, with text by Tom Long and music by Alan Pote. The choir already enjoys singing a number of anthems by Pote and these particular Christmas arrangements are as singable, listenable, and enjoyable as any. The work includes settings of Christmas music familiar and new, accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble. In addition, the Handbell Choir will offer some terrific arrangements of *Silent Night* and *While By My Sheep*. As always the entire assembly will sing some favorite carols of the season.

Our choir has been working hard to prepare this music and has devoted a good part of the weekly Thursday night rehearsals since September to learn it well. We are again pleased to have several guest singers from the college and the greater community to join us to beef up our numbers. Things are really beginning to sound wonderful!

I hope you will take the time to invite someone to come to this concert with you. I've said many times, and research proves it time and time again: a personal invitation is more effective than the most elaborate publicity campaign! This beautiful music, so full of the timeless message of God's love and grace through the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, is perhaps just the thing someone out there needs to hear – particularly at this time of year. And, sometimes those folks might not necessarily come to church on a Sunday morning, but might be open to a church

event like this concert. Please take the time to invite someone to join you – maybe even offer to pick them up. AND – the lovely reception will take place in our newly refurbished Fellowship Hall, now fully accessible by the elevator!

On the four Sunday mornings of Advent, beginning December 2, the choral anthems, hymns, songs and responses in the service will help us to more fully explore the themes of each service and provide the general feel for Advent, truly preparing ourselves and waiting for Christmas instead of just celebrating Christmas for the whole month. In addition to an appropriate anthem from the choir, we will be using more seasonal responses: a Christmas offertory response text set to the familiar Doxology tune as well as the sung benediction response, “Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel will come to us, the people of God.”

Our two Christmas Eve services will feature a mix of inspirational choral music, solos, handbell music, and carols sung by all in a lessons and carols format. And of course not to be missed at both services is the beautiful moment of candle lighting while singing *Silent Night*. Holy Communion will be celebrated at the late service. Make plans to attend one or both of these services this Christmas Eve.

Each year, as Advent and Christmas come around yet again, my prayer is that our personal seasonal satisfaction from our celebrations and special activities not be gauged just by a checklist of all the things we think we need to do, or our various unique traditions, or even just by the wonderful gatherings of family and friends.

Instead let us each resolve to seek and experience God's love in Jesus Christ in a new, deeper, and more dynamic way than last year. God's love in Christ is so unfathomable – surely we should encourage each other to look deeper into that story of love and find in it fresh meaning for our lives today. The richness of tradition, family rituals, and good cheer are blessings fine and good, but the real, bottom line Truth of Christmas will not be found in any of these. Could you imagine a Christmas with no traditions, dinners, cookies, fruitcake, gifts, gatherings, or even music? Wow, it's not easy to do! Yet would the simple truth that Jesus Christ was born to save God's people be enough for us to feel like we still had something to celebrate? Would only that be enough? Make room in your life this season for the Word of God, the worship, the music, the prayers, and the Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace that transcend all the cultural clutter of the season. | SDG, JO

By Heaven's Light

*A Celebration of Christmas
in Scripture and Song*

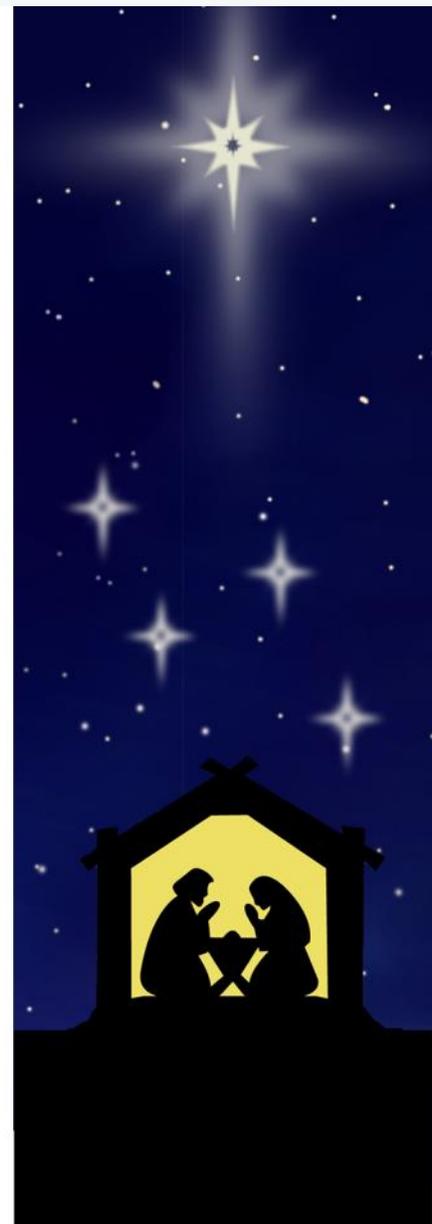
**Sunday, Dec. 9
4:00 pm**

*Seasonal music for choir, instrumental ensemble,
handbell choir, and singing of familiar carols*

Free Admission

2018 Community Concert Series
Sharing the gift of music in the name of Christ

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church
45 North Manning Street Hillsdale, MI 49242
517-437-3681 | www.hillsdalefirstumc.com
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Missions and Ministries



Heifer International | Heifer empowers families to turn hunger and poverty into hope, and their approach is much more than just giving families a handout. The Heifer program provides animals that farmers and communities can use to produce sustainable products such as milk, eggs, and honey that can be traded or sold. Your prayers for this mission and your contributions to Heifer this month will bring hope in the name of Christ to our neighbors in this country and throughout the world. | *Missions Team*

Wrapped in God's Love | We appreciate your prayers and support for our **Wrapped in God's Love** ministry, offered in Christ's name to our neighbors during this Advent season. Christmas bags will be available for families during the Agape cart time after breakfast at our 11:00 am worship service on Sunday, December 16. We encourage you to share in this service as we share God's love with others. | *ONE Team*

Bulletin Board Headlines

December Anniversaries

18 Tim and Sue Walter

December Birthdays

3 Erin Caldwell
5 Bettie Monroe
6 Ethan Amburgey
8 Janet Lee
13 Peg Long
20 Holly Scheibner
21 Taylor Lee
23 Rick Lee
24 Kerri Nash
26 Marla Bowen
28 Marlene Risedorph

January Anniversaries

1 Aaron and Ginny Delauter
10 Dick and Sonja Slagle
24 Dan and Kathy Nestorak

January Birthdays

1 Jeri Little
7 Elaine Rich
10 Dan Nestorak
14 Jeff Hart
16 Anna Bertalon
28 Dick Emery

Prayer Requests | Prayers for anyone who is in need of God's comfort and peace.

Continuing: Wendy Billman, Jack Bowles, Ruth Brown, Lorna Busch, Marie Crall, Shirley Cummings, Aaron Delauter, Mike Hamilton, Kristine Hasty, Beth Crapo Liebold, Peg Long, Bettie Monroe, Randy Omo, Carolyn Parker, Gene Parker, Jack Reamer, Betty Scheibner, Maribeth Watkins, Gary Welch, Frances Wells, Rev. Tamara Williams

In Nursing Care or at Home: Dorothy Aspinall (in Illinois), Sammy Brink, B.J. Clark, Shirley Connolly, Susie Eichler, Lois Fosbender, Bert Hill, Ruth Huston, Jackie Mitchell, Bettie Monroe, Colleen Ridenour, Betty Scheibner

Serving in the Military: Ricardo Arellano, Emily Mitchell

Notes of Thanks

Thank you for the lovely and tasty desserts you furnished for Dad's (Tom Bildner's) memorial. We all know how he loved his sweets. It was very appreciated. | *Pat Bildner, Beth Bildner, Sally Wood*

We are thankful for all of you who shared your prayers and presence, faith and friendship, time and tenderness with our family during our mom's illness and after her passing. You have brought many blessings... | *The family of Pat Laurell*

DECEMBER 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 10a Sanctuary Preparation
2 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Fellowship Hall) 7p Boy Scouts Court of Honor	3 5:15p SPRC	4 6p Lions Club 7:30p Handbells	5 9:30a Bible Study 6:30p Bible Study	6 11a BLOOD DRIVE 6:30p Choir 8p Praise Band	7	8 10a Concert Dress Rehearsal 11a MVR Potluck 1p HCSA Recital Rehearsal
9 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Fellowship Hall) 4p COMMUNITY CONCERT 7p Boy Scouts	10 5:30p Trustees	11 6:30p Finance 7:30p Handbells	12 9:30a Bible Study 6:30p Bible Study	13 6:30p Choir 8p Praise Band	14	15
16 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship with breakfast & Wrapped in God's Love 3p HCSA Recital 7p Boy Scouts	17 6:30p Worship Team	18 7:30p Handbells	19 9:30a Bible Study 6:30p Bible Study	20 6:30p Choir 8p Praise Band NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 KJP move back to HFUMC	22
23 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Fellowship Hall) Noon Sanctuary Preparation	24 CHRISTMAS EVE: Office Closed 7p Candlelight Worship 11p Candlelight Worship	25 CHRISTMAS DAY: Office Closed	26	27	28	29
30 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Fellowship Hall)	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE Office Closed	JAN 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Office Closed				

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people- to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. -Luke 2:10-11



Christmas Eve Monday, December 24

7:00 pm & 11:00 pm

December

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