

# Methodist Messenger

*Prague/Arlington Charge*

*April, 2017*

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## **The Beauty of the Resurrection**

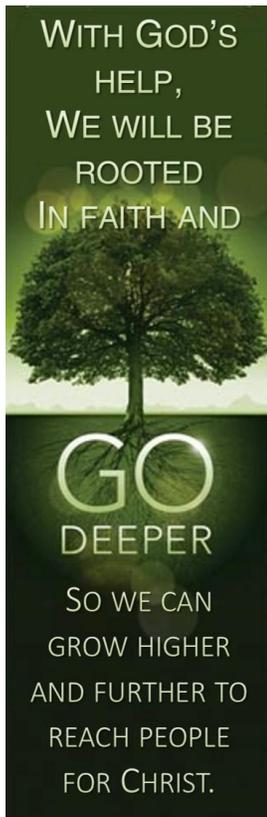
Having been in churches for a time and having approximately 16 Easter sermons under my belt, I have found that sometimes people take Easter for granted. I only say that because, I know many women who stay home Easter Sunday so they can prepare the Easter banquet to serve to their families that afternoon. Even those who never miss a Sunday service unless so ill they cannot rise from bed will stay home to prepare a meal for the family, then wonder why their children do not find church important to their everyday lives. I know many folks who want to make Easter a family holiday to bring people together, but church isn't included in their festivities. Christmas and Easter have historically been those high attendance Sundays that bring the family of God together, but they are increasingly becoming more secularized and the church is no longer relevant. Therefore, I find I should stress the beauty of this day.

The day that makes Christians Christian should never be taken for granted. Easter is truly what Christians are all about. We are resurrection people, we believe in new life and eternal life. We believe that God can make all things and people new. The sins of the past are swept away in one stroke as the sinner comes in repentance. The dreariness of life is renewed in the face of the living Christ. We do not grieve as those with no hope. Church going should not be about a duty or drudgery, but a renewal in body, mind, and spirit. Perhaps we have forgotten the significance of the resurrection, because we become so focused on the cross. We look at an empty cross and profess that we believe that Christ died so that our sins could be forgiven, but we forget the really important work of God in that moment—the power of fear and death; the burden of sin; the struggle in persecution; the grip of sorrow on our hearts is no more. It has been overcome! We have been set free! This is the celebration of the resurrection!

It is beautiful. Resurrection erases the ugliness of death and celebrates the beauty of the redemptive work of God. In our focus of being Christian—or being Methodist, or Baptist, or Assembly of God, or whatever brand denomination we claim—we have forgotten that in the power of the resurrection we are all one in the body of Christ. There should be no divisions of the body of Christ. It is nothing short of glorious.

This Easter make a point of celebrating the resurrection, and coming together with one voice declaring we are resurrection people! It is wonderful if you celebrate it with your family, but remember we come together as the family of God in true worship of God. Bring the kids who are so busy they feel they have no time for church. Bring the moms or dads who feel they must prepare the feast. Bring the children who will be excited to wear their new clothes. Bring the widow or widower who misses their spouse. Bring those for whom the church is their only family. Bring all God's children to worship. It is the day of Resurrection! It is beautiful! It is the reason for our being Christians; without this day, there would be no reason to have the feast, the new clothes, or our hope in the face of death.

See you Easter Sunday morning!      Rev. Sonja Tobey



## Discussing the Future

On Sunday, March 12, 2017, there was a meeting looking to and strategically planning the future of Prague UMC. It was attended by 31 people. During this meeting, the participants discussed the effectiveness (both recent and historical) of the church. Additionally, we looked at the dreams for the church's future. We discussed what contributes to the decline of churches and what contributes to the growth of churches, and how we see our church in comparison. Our strengths and weaknesses were evaluated, as were the opportunities we have and the threats facing the church today.

Additionally, we looked at the community around us, and several of us were surprised to find out it wasn't what they thought. The community is growing, albeit not quickly, but is growing and not in decline. Prague is one of the few communities not in a metropolitan area that is growing in Oklahoma. The average income in Prague is higher than the Oklahoma state average. While the largest demographic are Families and Empty Nesters (ages 35-54), the fastest growing demographic are the Career and College Starts (ages 18-24) which have seen a 3% increase since 2010 and are expected to continue to increase over the next ten years. Another growing demographic, although not as quickly, are the Singles and Young Families (ages 25-34). We discussed how to reach these growing demographics

As a result, there were some things we have decided to focus on for the future.

- Our desire is to be a thriving, not merely surviving congregation. To do that we will focus on deepening our own faith and discipleship.
- Therefore, we have decided that our vision is to be deeply committed disciples of Christ who live out our faith by growing in discipleship, growing closer to God, and growing in number of deeply committed disciples, that we may reach our community for Christ. From that, our mission is **"with God's help, we will be rooted in faith and go deeper, so we can grow higher and further to reach people for Christ."**
- We will have expectations of the members, and expectations for the leadership (both laity and clergy) of the church.
- We will grow in our discipleship so that we may in turn encourage others to meet and become disciples of the living Christ.
- As a congregation, Prague United Methodist Church values community, discipleship, prayer, witness, service, and worship.

We made plans for the immediate future (one year) and goals for five to ten years in the future to be looked at yearly.

Short-term (one year or less) goals are:

- Develop an expectation of deepening discipleship for leaders and members and implement it by covenant with the new slate of officers by October 1, 2017.
- Renovate old sanctuary for youth space including a place for learning, fellowship, fun, and activities. This should be accomplished and ready to go by September 1, 2017.
- Offer a Wednesday evening worship service at the "Flame," This will include a look at space and making the space a flexible area. This needs to be accomplished by June 1, 2017.
- Start small groups for discipleship and faith development by September 1, 2017.
- Implement ways of connecting with and following up with visitors including trained greeters, information area, visitor's entrance, and signage to be in place by September 1, 2017

Longer term goals are:

- To develop a new ministry opportunity to reach out to those under the age of 35, particularly those with young children and families. In five years we will have established a new ministry that has brought in 50 new members by either profession of faith or transfer of membership. This ministry would reach out to people in the community who currently are un-churched or are marginally churched to help them grow spiritually and become fully committed disciples of Jesus Christ.
- To have all of our church leadership go through Covenant Bible Study and/or Disciple Bible Study, and for participation in a long-term study to be an expectation of church leadership.
- To have leadership training retreats, staff retreats and planning retreats as part of a yearly process of church organization.
- To bring facilities up to code including a sprinkler system throughout the church, and remodeling of the "Flame" building.
- Renovate outdoor space and make a "visitors entrance." Repair and renovate entrance to Sanctuary (Youth space). Paint back of the "Flame" and create an outdoor area for seating or gathering.

We will hold on to the promise found in Jeremiah 17:8:

*They will be like trees planted by the streams, whose roots reach down to the water. They won't fear drought when it comes; their leaves will remain green. They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit.*

We are excited about the future of promise that God has in store for us. We are looking forward to deepening our discipleship and beginning small groups for covenant and accountability. The trustees will be meeting this Sunday to discuss the facilities and we will be having a Church Council meeting in May for more discussion. Be sure to look for more information coming soon.

## Membership Expectations and Covenant



*They will be like trees planted by the streams, whose roots reach down to the water. They won't fear drought when it comes; their leaves will remain green. They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit. Jeremiah*

17:8

In accordance with our membership covenant we will support our church by our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. As members of Prague United Methodist Church we will be rooted in faith and GO DEEPER so

we can grow higher and further to reach people for Christ. To fulfill both of these promises we will

1. Pray for our church, its leadership, its membership, its staff, and its pastors.
2. Attend church regularly, missing only if we are sick or out of town.
3. Tithe or work toward a tithe in our giving.
4. Serve both at the church and in the community on behalf of the church as we are asked and our gifts are needed.
5. Share our faith by both word and deed.
6. Commit to growing in our discipleship, and allow ourselves to be held accountable to the covenant we make.



## **AIRMEDCARE MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY**

**March 29, 2017 at 6-7 pm  
1106 Jim Thorpe Blvd (The Flame)**

You never know when a medical emergency will arise. But when it does, time and access to patient care can mean everything. At times, traveling by land is not the best option. That's why an **AirMedCare Network** membership is so important. If you have a medical emergency, our alliance of affiliated air ambulance helicopters and airplanes provide medical transport, dramatically reducing travel time to an emergency treatment facility.

By becoming a member of AirMedCare Network, you will be covered by all AirMedCare Network providers in all of their service areas—which are expanding with additional bases every day. You'll become a member of our growing community of over 2.6 million members—the largest of its kind in the United States.

That means you benefit from:

- No out of pocket expenses in connection with your flight.
- Over 260 aircraft locations
- Network extending out across 32 states
- Highly skilled nurses, medics and pilots ready 24 hours a day
- Peace of mind. So you can focus on recovery.

On Wednesday, March 29, 2017, a representative of AirMedCare Network will be at the church to discuss membership with anyone interested. In an agreement with the hospital, our church is getting a discounted membership rate of \$55 a year, a \$10 discount.

There is also a discount on 3, 5 & 10 year memberships. Coverage begins upon receipt of the membership application and the cost for the membership.

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## **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN**

Information from Secretary MM Greene

The UMW met Thursday, March 9. The refreshments were abundant and varied so as to provide a delightful meal, as members enjoyed their coffee and iced tea.

Discussion revolved almost entirely on the upcoming kolache baking days. Sign-up sheets for volunteers in different phases of the effort, had a significant positive effect on apricot filling preparation. Instead of two ladies cooking over several days, a half dozen folks spent a single morning and had a good time doing it!

To avoid a large number of leftovers as was experienced last year, bakings will be restricted to cover **pre-ordered kolaches only**. Flavors will be **apricot, cherry, poppy seed, & cream cheese (no raisins)**. Please call the church office to place your order (\$12.)

Schedule conflicts necessitated a review of baking dates. **Confirmed baking dates are April 15 AND 29.**

If you want to do something, but have only a limited time and are not sure of where to plug in, please call Lisa Hefner and get your slot scheduled. Can't really work physically but want to help? Please pray. The money we make on this singular project funds everything the UMW supports, other than the BackPack program, which is funded by the Harvest Dinner.

All ladies, very young to very old, are invited to attend the next UMW meeting, tentatively set for **6 pm, Monday, April 3.**

### **Maundy Thursday Service**

– **April 13 at 7 pm at Arlington UMC**

### **Good Friday Service**

– **April 14 at 7 pm at Prague UMC**

### **Sermon Series**

- **beginning Easter Sunday, April 16**

### **Arlington Spring Meal**

– **April 8 at 5 pm**



## UNITED METHODIST MEN

Information from secretary/treasurer Jerry Opela

The March 3 meeting of the UMM was officiated by Pres. Jack Vaughan, who also led the devotional, "Where is Your Brother?"

The **next potato bar** has been scheduled for **April 23**.

Thanks to the individual efforts of Mike Tobey who trimmed the shrubs, Randy Eby who cleaned the south flower bed, and Jerry Opela and Randy's intention to spray the lawn, no church-wide work day is necessary this spring.

Randy Eby will lead the **April 1 meeting** devotional, "What's That in Your Mind?" All men and boys are invited on April's first Saturday morning at 7 am for breakfast, fellowship, devotional, and service. Come and see.



## DRAMATIC ARTS

Information from Director Barbara Holman

Please join us in preparing for the **Easter season cantata** entitled "Amazing Love, How Can It Be" to be presented on Palm Sunday, **April the 9<sup>th</sup>**, during the Prague church morning worship service. Not only will we have beautiful arrangements of music, but it will be incorporated with visual screen presentations and interpretive drama.



## SIGN LANGUAGE

Written by Director Rev. Sharon Capron

The children's sign language class has been ever refreshing and so inspiring. By the time you read this newsletter, this group of youngsters will have presented at Arlington and Prague three times, as well as in children's Quest worship. Thank you, parents for your support!



Lucy & State Senator Jason Smalley – file photo 2015

## LUCY SARGENT is GOING to CHINA

When the Study Abroad Program at Seminole State invited students to sign up for an international experience, our own Lucy Sargent signed up to go. Folks know Lucy from her work with Quest and Sunday school children, her children's sermons, youth group activity, and her two years as an Annual Conference delegate, one year as the Stillwater District Youth delegate and one as a Prague church delegate. You may also have seen Lucy behind the office counter at Beachlers. Lucy gave such a stirring speech at the 2015 Veteran's Day observance, that State Senator Jason Smalley selected her to be his page for a week at the Senate. Lucy's "pseudo-mom" is Rebecca Bond. Lucy is finishing her freshman year at Seminole and will be transferring to OCU in the fall, majoring in speech pathology.

Once Lucy secured a spot on the China trip, she committed herself to taking a pre-trip course in Chinese history, culture, and language. No, Lucy will not be fluent in time for the trip, but she will have a beginning level of understanding and rudimentary communication for the 15-day adventure which begins May 15.

Lucy is also committed to raising the funds for her trip which includes visiting Xian, Shang hai, Beijing, the Great Wall, and much more for the 3 sponsors and 13 students, who are planning to go. Lucy is also making plans to connect with her uncle, who currently lives in China. To make Lucy's goal of \$1200, she will be hosting a **spaghetti dinner** at the Prague Church at **noon on April 9**. Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased from Lucy or Rev. Sharon Capron.



united methodist youth fellowship

## UNITED METHODIST YOUTH

Written by Youth Team Leader

Tina Thompson

### SARA MARTIN WINS DEAN'S SCHOLARSHIP

Please congratulate Sara Martin, who is a recipient of the Dean's Scholarship at OCU. The application process is rigorous and includes a formal interview. The Dean's scholarship award is for 80% tuition and has the following eligibility requirements:

- Maintain a 3.0 Grade Point Average
- Continue commitment to a full-time vocation in the United Methodist Church
- Continue a course of study in the Wimberly School of Religion
- Be active in and provide leadership for the campus Religious Life Programs

Sara is a great example of the leadership skills of the youth raised in our church. The church's commitment to our children and youth programs help support young men & women like Sara, to be open to their call to discipleship by God.

### THE CREED – YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Along with the rest of the church, we have been using the Adam Hamilton Study Book for The Creed series. Our sessions include a video, where Adam teaches what he Creed means. At each session, each youth rolls a dice to determine what question they get to answer about their personal experience or belief in the section that we are studying. We have had some very meaningful discussion that is followed up with worship service on the same topic.

In our church-wide cottage meeting, Sonja mentioned that most of the church growth has been coming from the youth and children, who invite their friends to church. That was emphasized this month when I had 11 youth in my Sunday School class; they also attended our worship service!



### QUEST YOUTH

We finished studying a series on Baptism and Communion. Now we are learning about mistakes and the fact that no one is perfect. We are having a great time in Quest. Each session starts with recreation, where the kids get to hang out and enjoy each other's company. We then have a worship service, dinner and class. Each youth gets to enjoy fellowship, worship and hanging with their friends. We have many volunteers that help with Quest and couldn't manage without them. Most recently, we have had JoeAnn & Orvis Pritchett start helping; the kids call them Grandma & Grandpa. The youth enjoy having them around but have learned that they are not pushovers!



### YOUTH SERVICE DAY

Youth Service Day is sponsored by OCU. It consists of break-out sessions, followed by lunch in the school cafeteria and 1/2 day of service. This year, we took 5 youth and 2 adults. Our breakout sessions had to do with meditation and acting out scripture. For our service project, we visited a Muslim Mosque. They treated us with pizza and fruit and the opportunity to ask questions of their youth leader. See below for a youth point of view by Constance Hicks:

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, we went to the Oklahoma City University for Youth Service Day. We got to do many activities. We also made a new friend named Daniel. While we were there, we also went to lean up outside around the fence area. My personal favorite part was when I got to add my prayer to the prayer chain. Before we left, we all received Communion.



This photo was taken at Quest, March 22, 2017. It is only the children and their teachers on a typical Wednesday evening. Youth, their teachers and assistants, kitchen cooks and helpers, van drivers, and other involved persons, are all at Quest, but not pictured.

Every school-day Wednesday until May 1, the church van makes two trips and a private van makes one, to pick up students at all four schools. While teens are at the Flame for snacks, homework time, and relaxation, children gather in either the play room or the café for the same kind of opportunities. Sign language and other singing or drama opportunities hold their practices in season in the same flexible time slot, 3:15 – 5:30.

Quest officially begins at 5:30 with dinner for the elementary grades and worship for the youth. At 6 pm the two divisions switch. From 6:30 until 7:25 everyone is in some kind of class. The youth meet at tables or pews in the old sanctuary. The children split their class time between two selected rooms.



They might gather in the video room for a biblical children's program. The same room also serves as a theater for role playing bible

stories, the computer room, and/or the sign language classroom, as needed.



The craft room, aka science room, is always a crowd pleaser.



The café hosts homework with tutors, refreshments, and occasional projects like the one above.

At 7:25 the entire company meets in the big sanctuary for final songs, prayer, and van ride assignments, as needed.



Written by Children's Coordinator Melinda Pruett

Quest is coming to an end and we have really had some great fun. Thank you to all the volunteers that come and help us on Wednesday night. VBS meeting coming up on April 30<sup>th</sup>, right after worship. Snacks will be provided. **VBS is on June 4th through the 8th in the evening, 5:30 to 8.**

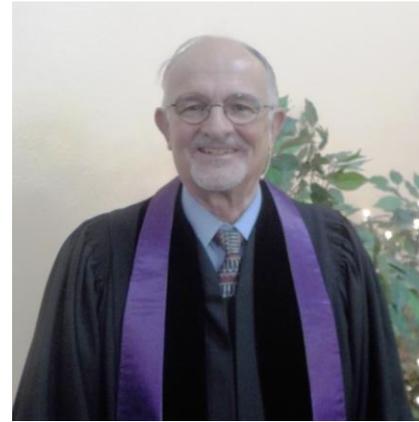


Pres. Lisa Hefner with Past-Pres. MM Greene

### **UMW SUNDAY**

UMW Sunday barely missed the March newsletter because of the February 26 date. The worship service, based on the national program, "A Call to Community" involved many members, and offered significant UMW information. Great job, ladies!

Please note that NOW is the time to order your kolaches (\$12) from Terri and please volunteer to assist with baking by contacting Lisa Hefner.



### **REV. JOHN "RUSTY" WILLIAMS**

On March 5, Rev. Sonja was committed as head clergy to be with Chrysalis, the teenage version of Emmaus. Rev. Williams was kind enough to sub for her at both Arlington and Prague, preaching the first sermon in "The Creed" series, "I Believe in God." Our churches thank God both for Rev. Sonja's commitment to our youth and Rusty's enablement of that commitment.



### **PRAGUE ALL-CHURCH COTTAGE MEETING**

Do Methodists ever meet without eating? The pre-cottage meeting potluck with Hefner's meat provided got us off to a great start!

On pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter, you read of the significant forward moves which over thirty people worked through at that most productive and inspiring meeting.

We are on the cusp of a new thing. Please continue in prayer for God's will in our churches and your place in God's plan.



### **ROBERT THOMPSON & JORDAN COLLINS BRIDAL SHOWER**

On Sunday, March 19, friends and relatives gathered to celebrate the coming marriage of Robert Thompson and Jordan Collins. Surrounded with glittering silver and royal purple, the couple opened gifts including many cards bearing both well wishes and financial blessings.

Barbara Holman did a beautiful job with décor and refreshments. It was a delightful afternoon experience for all who attended.

# APRIL 2017

## Saturday, April 01

7am United Methodist Men  
BD Billy Bruce

## Sunday, April 02

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington  
Sunday school/worship – Prague  
5 pm Lenten study  
BD Debbie Martin

## Monday, April 03

6 pm United Methodist Women

## Tuesday, April 04

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

## Wednesday, April 05

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out  
5:30- 7:30 pm Quest  
6:30 pm vocal choir

## Thursday, April 06

BD Jerry Opela

## Friday, April 07

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

## Saturday, April 08

5 pm Arlington Spring meal  
BD Will Capron

## Sunday, April 09

### PALM SUNDAY

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington  
Sunday school/worship – Prague

### EASTER CANTATA

### Lucy's Spaghetti Dinner

TBA Lenten study

## Monday, April 10

BD Cade Anderson

## Tuesday, April 11

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon  
BD Ryder Cale Carver

## Wednesday, April 12

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out  
5:30-7:30 *Quest*  
6:30 vocal choir  
BD Nancy Redding

## Thursday, April 13

7 pm Maundy Thursday  
service at Arlington

## Friday, April 14

KOLACHE MIXING  
6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon  
7 pm Good Friday  
service at Prague  
BD Danielle Morgan

## Saturday, April 15

KOLACHE BAKING

## Sunday, April 16

### EASTER SUNDAY

### 6:45 Sunrise Service

followed by breakfast  
Worship/Sunday school – Arlington  
Sunday school/worship – Prague  
NEW SERMON SERIES BEGINS  
at both churches

## Monday, April 17

BD Janette Smith  
WA Flint & Tracy Howard

## Tuesday, April 18

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

## Wednesday, April 19

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out  
5:30-7:30 *Quest*  
6:30 vocal choir  
BD John Coleman

## Thursday, April 20

## Friday, April 21

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon  
BD Terri Tackett

## Saturday, April 22

BD Rhyan Waltonbaugh

## Sunday, April 23

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington  
Sunday school/worship – Prague  
POTATO BAR  
Thompson/Collins wedding  
BD Richard Hefner

## Monday, April 24

BD Lena Pruett

## Tuesday, April 25

6 - 7 pm AA & Al-Anon  
BD Katie Hefner  
BD Charlene Kimery

## Wednesday, April 26

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out  
5:30-7:30 *Quest*  
6:30 vocal choir

## Thursday, April 27

BD Ryan Hefner

## Friday, April 28

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

## Saturday, April 29

KOLACHE BAKING

## Sunday, April 30

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington  
Sunday school/worship – Prague

BD = birthday

WA = wedding anniversary

## MAY DATES

06 – KOLACHE DAY

13 – tentative date for Rev.

Sharon's 100-mile bicycle  
ride for Lilley Prison chapel

14 - 6:30 Baccalaureate

15 – Lucy leaves for China

19 – 7 pm Graduation

29 – Memorial Day

Annual Conference

