

Methodist Messenger

Prague/Arlington Charge

December, 2017

Come Home for Christmas



No matter where life's
journey has taken us,
Christmas is the time to
come home.

*Come Home
for Christmas*

When you think of “**home**,” what do you recall? Perhaps it is a time in your childhood, or perhaps it is a time with your own children. For some, “home” is where the grandparents live, and for some it is with friends who have become family. Just the word “home” can conjure memories good and bad.

Now add **Christmas** which brings a wide variety of responses, also both good and bad. Lean years where giving gifts means a homemade project. Times when despite everything going on in the world, when you are with those you love, everything just feels *right*. Perhaps this Christmas is the first without a loved one present, whether they are far away or celebrating in heaven. Or maybe, it is a first Christmas with a new baby.

Whenever you think of coming home for Christmas, perhaps it has memories of traditions and feast, or perhaps it has memories of arguments and hurt feelings. Whatever these words conjure in your mind, remember Jesus. Jesus came to make his home with us on earth.

At Christmas, we find ourselves surrounded by lights and tinsel, garland and evergreens. We listen to “Jingle Bells” and “White Christmas” and watch all the Christmas movies. Yet, for many, the tinsel and garland of Christmas is tired and empty. There is a need to get back to what is familiar and real about Advent and Christmas—connecting with our families and faith. No matter where life’s journey has taken us, Christmas is the time to come home.

This Advent and Christmas season, let’s Come Home for Christmas!

O Come, O Come Emmanuel!

Rev. Dr. Sonja Tobey



Some people dread the month of December. The traffic is congested, the stores are overflowing, and if we hear "Jingle Bells" one more time... Some of us never really understand why we are grumpier this time of year, but for others, the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is a reminder of sorrows, or worries, or fears. Our hearts and minds are troubled by financial stress, an unwanted diagnosis, a reminder of those who are no longer with us, loss of a job, divorce, an uncertain future. The bells ringing and lights flashing seem to mock the heaviness we feel in our soul. Parties require us to put on a mask of cheerfulness over our visage of pain. If you can relate to this, you are not alone, many in our community experience sadness this time of year.

Churches can offer a sacred space for those who are living through dark times, and for those who walk the path with them. A "Blue Christmas" service offers a time to reflect and to bring peace amid the storm of our emotions. The longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21st, the Winter Solstice, provides the opportunity to gather in community and recognize we are not alone. A safe haven is offered to accept our feelings and to be accepted as we are, blues and all.

Join us at 7 pm on December 21st as we come together to be comforted and to bring comfort in our Blue Christmas Service.

Our Christmas Eve Service will be 7 pm, December 24th at the Prague church. It is a candlelight and communion service.

Details for the Christmas craft and story time designed for children & parents are in the Children's Ministry article on page 3.

Details for the Prague church Christmas party for all ages are on page 4.

Invite a friend and come celebrate Christmas!

Come Home for Christmas

A Worship Series through Advent and Christmas

December 3 – Isaiah 64:1-9, *Come Down Home*

December 10 – Choir Cantata – Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, *Home is Where We Meet*

December 17 – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, *Joy is Our True Home*

December 24 (morning) – Luke 1:46-55, *God Makes this World a Home (Part 1)*

December 24 (evening) – Luke 2:1-7 *God Makes this World a Home (Part 1)*

December 31 – A Festival of Lessons and Carols

Invite someone that you want to "Come Home for Christmas."



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Information from President

Lisa Hefner

The UMW did not meet in November, due to a big list of responsibilities, notably the Backpack program, the eminent Harvest Dinner, our visitors from Tanzania, Africa, and Thanksgiving!



Eric Capron, Bob Holman, and Brian Baker mince the giblets for Harvest Dinner stuffing.

What a great Harvest Dinner! With Eric Capron at the hub, two small work groups (turkey baking and pie making), and a host of additional volunteers on the big day, the dinner was a grand success! Approximately 275 were fed; about half were take-out. By 2 pm the dishes were done, the doors closed, and \$4000 was in the kitty. Not bad.

The ladies will be meeting in December. Please listen for worship service and UMW all-call announcements for details TBA.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"I know it seems crazy that God would choose to use ordinary people to accomplish his extraordinary purposes in the world, but he does. The question is, are you awake to the unexpected opportunities, events, and adventure God makes available to you?"

Aaron Tredway, from his book *Outrageous: Awake to the unexpected Adventures of Everyday Faith*



Written by Children's Coordinator Melinda Pruett
November came and went. The children enjoyed meeting Simon Peter. He talked to them about fishing. But it wasn't the kind of fishing that they expected. Simon was fishing for people, so that he could tell them about Jesus. The children learned about being disciples, and that they could be disciples too. They each took a bookmark with them, gave it to a friend, and invited them to church. If a child can do it, so can we!

December is coming. Get ready and hang on for the ride! The children had so much fun last year with "Lighting of the Park." They were able to see Mr. and Mrs. Claus. They also enjoyed making an assortment of crafts from Christmas Cards to necklaces, drinking cocoa, eating cookies, and watching the live Nativity. What a beautiful night! We expect the same or better this year!

December 3, 2 pm, St Nicholas Day all-family Christmas party, will be a time for children and parents to come to the Prague Fellowship Hall to make Christmas crafts and hear the Christmas story. We will have snacks and crafts for the kids, and also a special guest...

For Quest this month, we are learning about "The Journey to Bethlehem" and "The Christmas Messenger". We will be celebrating **Christmas caroling and Jesus' Birthday Party on Dec. 13th**. Parkland Manor, a few homes, and the hospital will make up our caroling list. We will also have a surprise guest that evening.

The holidays are sometimes hectic, but we need to remember what it really is all about: the celebration of a child being born in a manger.
God Bless, Melinda



UNITED METHODIST MEN

Information from secretary/treasurer Jerry Opela

The UMM met Saturday, November 4, Pres. Jack Vaughn presiding. Rick Martin offered the devotional, "Why are You Crying?" No business was discussed at the meeting. However, plans are currently underway to set up the nativity in the park in time for the "Lighting of the Park" on November 25. Tentative plan is for the men to gather for that work the early part of this week, so as not to interfere with Thanksgiving family plans.

The next UMM meeting will be 7 am, Saturday, December 2, for breakfast, fellowship, devotional, and business. Jack will be leading the devotional, "Do You Understand What I Have Done for You?" All men and boys are invited to drop by and enjoy.



Information from Director Barbara Holman

As we pause amidst the noise and distractions of this busy Christmas season, come join us as we bow together to worship with choruses of praise to relive the miraculous birth of Christ in that humble manger so long ago. We will be presenting "Come Let Us Adore" during the morning worship service December 10th. Prepare to let your hearts be renewed and drawn closer to the true hope and joy of Christmas!!!



PRAGUE CHRISTMAS PARTY for everyone!

On **December 17 at 2:30 pm** we will have a church Christmas Party with **games** and a **prize** for the ugliest Christmas Sweater(!) **Everyone brings** their **favorite** Christmas snack, treat, or goody. Ya'all come!



united methodist youth fellowship

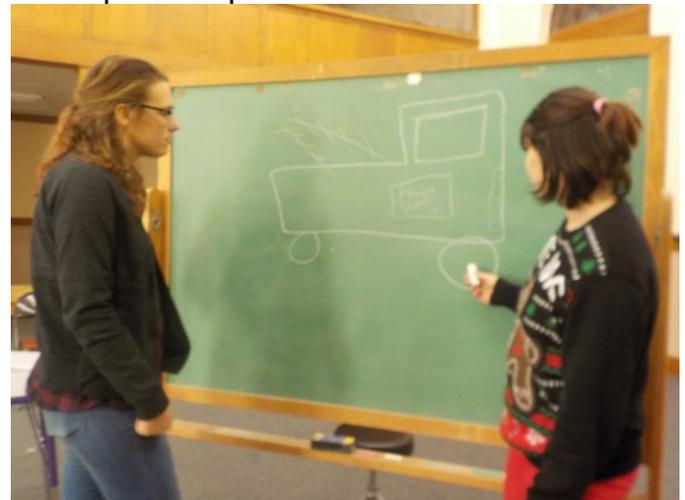
UNITED METHODIST YOUTH

Written by Youth Coordinator Destiny Donaldson

The youth have been continuing to work on the Fruits of the Spirit, and it fills my heart with joy, seeing them actually paying attention and absorbing the Sunday school lessons. We will be having a **recap party on December 3rd during Sunday School**. We invite you to come join us and see what all we have learned.

Starting December 10, we will be learning about Jesus and why we celebrate Christmas.

Within the next few days, the youth will be helping decorate Prague for Christmas by accepting the city's request to decorate in front of the police department.



Kasey McKee with Youth Coordinator Destiny Donaldson begin to lay out the plan for police dept. décor.

Keep in mind **Mid-Winter Retreat** is coming up on **January 12-15th**. Please get with me so I know who is going, so I can get you registered. – Destiny [405-404-1344](tel:405-404-1344)

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"Asking for something from God does not mean talking God into it; it means an awakening of the gift within ourselves."

Richard Rohr, Franciscan friar from his book *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*

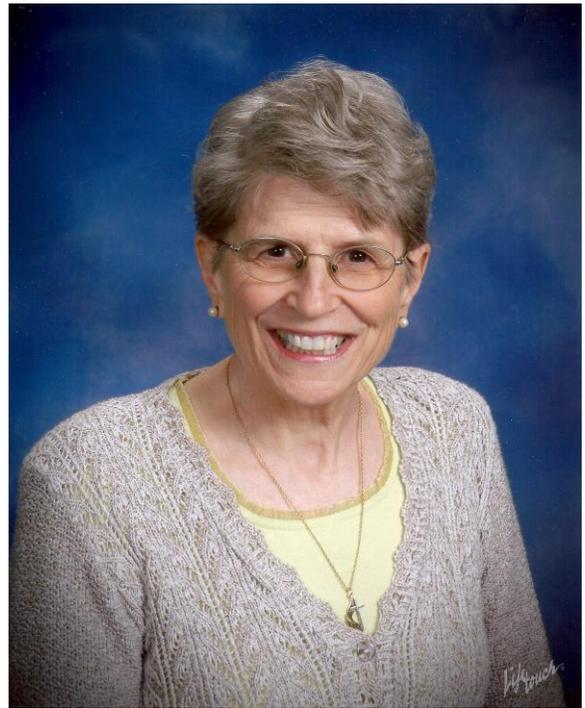


Abbey Warren, Molly Pruett, Emily Donaldson signing at Arlington file photo

SIGN LANGUAGE

Written by Director Rev. Sharon Capron

The children’s sign class has revived a previously presented piece, “Victory Chant.” Although I would have personally preferred something new, the children’s vote was unanimous! As a second offering, the children selected “The Lord’s Prayer” as presented on youtube by a children’s choir. Both pieces will be presented in sign sometime in January. The children’s class meets during Quest on Wednesday afternoons, 3:45 – 4:15.



Rev. Sharon Capron

In 1981, when the Corps of Engineers moved us out for Lake Arcadia, Reese and I noticed that all the farm properties we were considering for purchase circled the Prague area. So, one Sunday, we and the kids visited the Prague UMC. That adult Sunday school class resulted in a connection which led us to our current home of 36 years and counting.

From Larry Jacobson through Sonja Tobey, we both remained active in the life of the church. But I had missed my calling at 17, when I desperately desired to become a minister and was denied that option.

When our youngest graduated college and Reese and I were attending Annual Conference, I saw the seminary displays. Once again, my heart ached. Reese responded, “So what is stopping you now?” The rest is history. I will be retiring at this spring’s Annual Conference, having completed ten years as an ordained deacon. I will continue with some of my services: prison ministry, Quest, home visitation, but am letting go of others, like the newsletter.

Please welcome Destiny Donaldson, our Youth Coordinator, as our new editor for “The Methodist Messenger.”



The American Heritage Girls, sponsored by our charge’s UMW and led by Malinda Pruett, have been active for several months now. Pictured above, the girls are working on their latest service project, eighty Christmas stockings, to be given away to needy families through the Prague Christmas Store. In December, the girls will have a “Friends and Service Night” on the fourth and a Unit Meeting and Awards night on the eleventh. All meetings are at 6 pm.

THE CALL

It was a dream. No, couldn't be.
Perhaps a thing I might forget,
Still nudges more persistently.
It won't let go. It holds me yet.

What is this thing that gives me lead,
Yet pulls me back to keep this course?
The source might be Divine indeed.
I must obey this gentle force.

It's gentle, yes, but firmly holds.
I listen and His answer's clear.
By God in prayer, I have been told.
I ache to be His servant here.

"Here I am, Lord," I dare to say.
I tremble at the words I speak.
But God in mercy closely stays.
His peace surrounds; His will I seek.

Rev. Sharon B. Capron, winter, 2004

The poem above was written in response to a question in my ministry mentoring book with Rev. Dr. Cyndy Schillinger, in the beginning of my journey towards qualifying as an ordination candidate. The date is approximate. I also distributed the poem in a class presentation for United Methodist History and, upon request, submitted a copy for my file with the Stillwater District Board of Ministry.

Have you felt called to professional ministry and missed it? I was 55 when I returned to school, that is, to graduate school and to seminary. Scary? Not for long. Years of experience as a working adult made the goal far easier than anticipated. Are you a young person and thinking about it? Don't worry. If your call is genuine, God won't let you go, but will provide a way. Pray. Listen. Answer the call. God is always with us.

God's grace, Sharon



Destiny Cheyann Donaldson

Destiny was introduced as our new Youth Coordinator in the August issue of *The Methodist Messenger*. Now, she is being re-introduced as our new newsletter editor, in addition to her responsibilities with youth.

Here is a short recap of Destiny's biography. Destiny lives in Seminole County with dad Tim Donaldson, brother William (a 2017 Prague High grad), and little sister, Emily. Last May, Destiny graduated from Seminole State College with an Associate in Arts degree and a 3.5 GPA. This coming semester, she is pre-enrolled to begin studies at Oklahoma City University with a major in Religious Studies, specializing in Youth Ministry, and a minor - or possibly a second major - in Art.

Destiny began working with children a few years ago, has been working the church nursery for a year, and has served as an adult leader both for children and youth, ever since she turned eighteen. This past summer, while serving as an adult leader at our youth district camp, she received her call to ministry. Since then, Destiny has been leading a team of two to four adult helpers (Orvis & JoeAnn Pritchett, Brian Baker, and Susan Leatherwood) every Quest evening with the youth.

I have been impressed not only with Destiny's enthusiasm, kindness, and energy, but also with her organizational skills, writing skills, and eagerness to assume the newsletter. Go, girl!! With God's blessing, Sharon Capron

DECEMBER 2017

Friday, December 01

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Sharon Immel
BD David Butler

Saturday, December 02

7am United Methodist Men

Sunday, December 03

Come Down Home

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington
Sunday school/worship – Prague
9:30 Youth Sunday school

recap party

2 pm ST. NICHOLAS DAY

FAMILY PARTY

Monday, December 04

6 pm AHG Friends & Service night

Tuesday, December 05

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Roy Willis
BD Connie Sturm
BD Lynn Wilhite
BD Margaret Wallace

Wednesday, December 06

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out
3:30 - 7 pm Quest
6:30 pm vocal choir

Thursday, December 07

BD Ty Carver

Friday, December 08

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Tyler Hamm

Saturday, December 09

Sunday, December 10

Home is Where We Meet

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington
Sunday school/worship – Prague
BD Donna Smith

Monday, December 11

6 pm AHG unit meeting & awards

Tuesday, December 12

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Melissa Weddle

Wednesday, December 13

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out
3:30 - 7 pm Quest Christmas
caroling & Jesus' birthday party
6:30 vocal choir

Thursday, December 14

6 pm United Methodist Women?
BD Nancy Opela

Friday, December 15

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

Saturday, December 16

BD JoAnn Howell
BD Levoy Dukes

Sunday, December 17

Joy is Our True Home

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

2:30 Prague Christmas Party

Monday, December 18

BD Glen Brauer
BD Jamie Bruce

Tuesday, December 19

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Sharon Rogers
BD Fred Tull

Wednesday, December 20

11 am Arlington Ladies Day Out

Thursday, December 21

Friday, December 22

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
WA Mark & Judy Coleman

Saturday, December 23

Sunday, December 24

God Makes this World

a Home (Part 1)

Worship/Sunday school – Arlington
Sunday school/worship – Prague
7pm Christmas Eve service

God Makes this World

a Home (Part 2)

Monday, December 25

BD Berniece Dinius
WA Wayne & Kristie Stricklin

Tuesday, December 26

6 - 7 pm AA & Al-Anon

Wednesday, December 27

Thursday, December 28

Friday, December 29

6 – 7 pm AA & Al-Anon
BD Riggy Howell
WA Richard & Lisa Hefner

Saturday, December 30

Sunday, December 31

A Festival of Lessons

and Carols

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

BD = birthday

WA = wedding anniversary

JANUARY DATES

12-15 Mid-Winter Retreat