



THE MESSENGER

Vol. XXXIV No. 3

Central UMC

December, 2020

**Sunday Service at 11:00 each
Sunday at**

**<http://facebook.com/cumccharlotte>
and we now have Drive-In service to
allow you to better connect with your
church family**

Sunday School 12:30

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3509008260?pwd=SEoxQ2NUSDI0K0huZ1dubWtDODU0Zz09>

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Pastor Pam's Ramblings...

Christmas is coming! It will probably be the most unusual and unforgettable time for us all.

We're having to cope with the stress, challenges and shut down of this world wide pandemic.

As we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus we feel like the entire world is in chaos.

Shopping is not the same. Spending time with family and friends is not the same. Nothing is as

it was last year. No, we will not be able to gather for our choir cantata and hand bell service,

our Christmas meal, or Christmas Eve service. Yes, it seems a bit dark.

One night while riding through the country, I noticed the houses that were lit up and decorated for Christmas shining through the dark.

It brought joy to my heart, not the kind the world can take away. I

sensed a connection with the stranger's house. This popular tradition of lights symbolizes light, hope and good in the world. Not in a

long time have we needed more light shining through the darkness, or a sign of hope in a hope challenged world.

We all need to be reminded that there is a bigger story at work in the world than what we get from network news. Emmanuel, God is

with us, we are not alone. The Lord has come down to be with us.

Thanks be to God, Amen?

The challenge of finding "the true meaning of Christmas" might be much easier this year. We know how

needy we can be and where to truly find what we need, in a dirty barn back behind the Bethlehem Ramada

Inn. We are not alone, besides we have each other, only a phone call

away. We are in this together; Jesus is with us riding through the storm.

Just as God chose to use a star in the East, so too, God's plan is to use us as shining stars who point lost and

lonely people to Christ. Christmas will be far different this year. We can either spend time protesting the changes, or, better yet, we can seek the Lord's wisdom as to how to bring our message to a world that is deep in despair and sorrow. This is what Apostle Paul meant when he instructed the people of God to be like shining stars in the universe. As we are just beginning the season of Advent and starting a new Christian year, may we remember that Jesus Christ came to us in the middle of the night, meek and mild, not to be a king who conquers kingdoms and principalities with anger, force and division. Instead, he came to be The King, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, God with us. As we remember that, maybe, just maybe, we can bring about a new sense of peace and love as we share the message of Christ with others.

It's been a long year with the pandemic. The number of confirmed cases is still growing. Where can we find hope? Is there hope? Yes! We find hope in Christmas. Christmas is about God's coming to us in His Son, Jesus. God knows what we have been going through. God feels what we feel. As long as He feels our feelings, God can't stay far away from us because He loves us so much. Indeed, the angel said, "He (Jesus) shall be named Emmanuel (God is with us)."

So how can we not celebrate Christmas, the God of Emmanuel? In spite of the Coronavirus pandemic, fear not. God is with us. And let us celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus with joy and move forward to a new year with hope and peace. God was with us. God is with us. God will be with us.



For Drive-In Church Service

we ask you to do the following things to keep us all safe.

- Drive to the back parking lot and leave one car space between you and next car.
- We will have a couple of folks directing parking.
- You will be provided with the radio station to tune in on.
- Please stay in your car and if you have to roll the windows down wear a mask.
- Bathrooms will not be available.
- We strongly recommend no gathering outside of your car.

Gifts in Honor/Memory Budget

Memorium

In memory of Larry Hunt by Dick and Louise Woods

In memory of Arthur Jones- Artie Jones' Dad by Dick and Louise Woods

In memory of Betty Bell's Brother by Dick and Louise Woods

In memory of Lisa Fowler's sister-in-law by Dick and Louise Woods

In memory of Leigh Helms by Dick and Louise Woods

In memory of Lindsey Moss' grandfather by Dick and Louise Woods

To Christmas for the Troops-

In honor of CUMC Veterans by Dick and Louise Woods

In honor of Gladys Kelley by Bill and Bev Ward

In memory of Leigh Helms by Dr & Mrs Jerry Childress

In honor of Sandra Lanier by Dick and Louise Woods to Christmas for the Troops



Spiritual Life

"We Still Need Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love!"

2020 December Spiritual Guide

For the first time in forty-one years, we didn't celebrate Thanksgiving at the Denny house. That did NOT mean that we weren't thankful. Our four children and ten grandchildren celebrated with their own families.

Langston and I celebrated together. What did WE celebrate? For what were WE thankful? God! Jesus!

The gift of life, love in the world that's stronger than evil. We celebrated by looking back at the past and remembering good times, which for us always were times of laughter. We looked at the present and saw each other healthy, in our home, together. We praised God for being able to see, hear, smell, taste, and move. As Pastor Pam says in her praying, "For a reasonable amount of good health." (Pastor Pam has some phrases that I tag as hers alone and that make me smile to repeat them.)

Like many of you reading this, Langston and I have two families: the ones I've just mentioned and the one of which YOU are part. Our church family is dear, dear to us! We MISS our church family. But instead of grumbling over what we don't have, we chose to remember what we did and will have again.

We have old friends like the Eudys, the Laniers, and we have new friends like Maria Cardarelli, Miguel, and many Spanish-speaking people.

We have memories of fellowship meals, ordinary and special services, Bible studies, and so many more. We gave thanks.

I say this as we go into the Advent season. I go in HOPE. That's week

one. I hope for healing of our nation in terms of divisions, and I hope for healing of our world in terms of COVID. I go with PEACE that is inside my heart because of Jesus. I pray He's in your heart, too, especially if you don't know PEACE apart from the circumstances all around. I go with JOY because I live Ps. 30:5b ("Sorrow may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning"). Bad times come, but they also don't stay forever. I go with LOVE.

If I ever feel like I'm running out of love, I pray. God IS love. When I'm aware of His Presence, I breathe in His love. I know that this Advent won't be full of people I love, activities I enjoy, traditions we've always followed. I also know that each year I've longed for more quiet times with Langston and more time to spend with God. I am thankful for this "one of a kind" holiday. Draw near, and He will draw near to you.

Search, and He will let you find Him. We still need hope, peace, joy, and love. In December, spend time in the Word reading verses of hope, peace, joy, and love. Pray or just sit in His Presence. Invite Him into your heart. Merry Christmas!

Bobbie Denny, Spiritual Lay Leader

Missions

Central Cares will be giving some extra things in the December boxes. You gave some of these within the GIVING TREE of November. Thank you! In addition to the pantry and cleaning items, we will give school supplies to the school children in the receiving families. We gave a small amount in August, and we need

to give some more now for second semester. We will give a few "stocking" things, like books, games, and CANDY, of course. We will give cards from Food Lion or Walmart so families can purchase their own idea of a Christmas meal (ham or tamales or ?). You may give to help us make the December boxes special.

We could use items mentioned above, money to purchase what we don't yet have, or any paper

goods (toilet tissue, paper towels).
THANKS!

Bev Cheville, Bobbie Denny

Introducing a New Ministry at

Central – Central Feeds on Wheels

The King will answer them, "I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you did for one of my brothers or sisters, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it to Me."

Matthew 25:30

Central has many outreach programs for the community surrounding the church, but a new program is being introduced for our own congregation here at Central – Central Feeds on Wheels. This is an offshoot of Central Feeds with one difference: the recipients of this program will be our own congregation. Initially, lunch plates will be prepared in the church kitchen and delivered to those who are homebound, ill, or maybe just unable to get out for groceries.

Launch date is Monday, December 7 and starting out, plates will be served one day per week on Monday to a small group of 10-15 congregants who have been identified.

Your prayers are coveted for Central Feeds on Wheels. Please direct any questions or concerns to Bette Nazarchyk (bette.nazarchyk@carolina.rr.com) or Bobbie Denny (bsdenny4648@att.net).



Honduras Need

The people of Honduras need our help as they recover from the devastation of Hurricane Eta. As our church family knows from Hurricane Katrina, the recovery process takes years. It also gives us a chance to make a difference.

I feel a personal connection with Honduras, having been there twice with CCC (Carolina Cross Connection), most recently in 2019 with Amanda Pippin, Ashley Pimentel, and a church from Lexington, North Carolina. I've sometimes heard the question, "why don't we help the people right here before we help those far away?" To which CCC answers, "We ARE helping the people right here!" CCC has a longest history (30+ years) of serving people throughout North Carolina.

In fact, when I went to Honduras, it reminded me in many ways of North Carolina. There's coasts, there's mountains, there's in-between. There are bustling cities and rural spaces. In the cities you can find shopping malls, McDonalds, and tall buildings. In those rural areas I saw the same things I see in rural N.C.: the local fried-chicken shack, cows wandering free, and old farm equipment that's kept operational out of ingenuity and necessity. And the wonderful people of Honduras, like the wonderful people I've met in North Carolina through CCC, made us feel very much at home.

Our group visited several different children's homes. Many of the children in these homes come from areas of severe poverty that, while I have seen in North Carolina, are not nearly as widespread. The people who work at these homes were very gracious hosts and showed us the ways they are investing in the lives of these children to give them good health, an education, and job skills that will serve them well when they become adults.

Teaching geography has caused me to think a lot about landscapes. The landscape at these children's homes included play spaces: football (soccer) fields, playgrounds, volleyball courts, and old tires buried in the ground. They included spaces where children learn to work: vegetable gardens, tortillerias, computer labs, laundry rooms, chicken coops. They included

spaces that feed the soul: chapels, painted murals, natural spaces, and walls that display student creations and their answers to the prompt "Yo quiero ser..." ("I want to be...")

I recently saw a photograph of one of the children's homes we visited, and landscape that had been full of so much joy was flooded with muddy water. What they had was already humble by many of our standards, and now much of it has been damaged or destroyed. While we can't travel there right now, the partnerships that CCC has developed with local, trusted children's homes and other independent agencies puts us in a unique position to respond financially. The people of Honduras are resilient and will overcome this disaster, but in these areas they must do that without many financial resources, insurance policies, or government institutions. As we know, even with those things present, recovering from a hurricane is not easy.

Following this link will allow you to send aid via Jimmy and Sandra, who are the heart, soul, and lifeblood of CCC's Honduras ministry. I've stayed at their house, as have Amanda, Ashley, and all CCCers for years. If you would prefer to give to individual children's homes I can provide you with that information as well.

<https://carolinacrossconnection.org/givehope/>

Donations Needed

Christmas for Central Cares

Each family will get a stocking.

These items are needed:

- stocking from the Dollar Tree
- packs of hot chocolate
- candy canes
- packs of popcorn
- individually wrapped Christmas cookies (Little Debbie's)

Each student will get more supplies to replenish what they've used. These items are needed:

- #2 pencils

- notebooks
- erasers
- notebook paper
- mechanical pencils

Christmas Party in a Bag will be in place of a Christmas Party. These items are needed:

- packs of hot chocolate
- Little Debbie Christmas cakes
- Christmas candy

Letters to New Arrivals

Central UMC families took part in writing letters to newly arrived immigrant families. We partnered with the Latin American Coalition to make these families feel welcome in the U.S.



servicing our country overseas. The donations were also provided to our local troops. 2020 was a challenging year to say the least. However, as usual CUMC came through to do what was needed to honor our military. Children and youth made personalized Christmas cards for each stocking, a couple of members and kind volunteers sewed stockings, and adult members provided 150 Christmas cards to be included. Several members helped to prepare items to be placed in the stockings. The list goes on and on and shows the effort put into the project this year!

Thank you!
Sandra Lanier & Lib Bakis



Update from Finance Committee

As we mentioned in our previous article, we do have some additional repairs to be made to our church. The Trustees have received an estimate of approximately \$19,000 for necessary roof repairs. Some of these repairs will be immediate; others will carry into early 2021 weather permitting. While we will be taking the funds from the operating budget, we had not been able to anticipate this need. As we told you last month, we would like to ask you to reflect upon your blessings and continue to support Central as you can, especially in these unusual times. We will continue to keep you apprised of offerings versus needs as we have tried to do throughout the year. May God continue to keep you safe and bless you throughout the end of the year!

Yvette Cianci



Christmas for Troops Update

Thanks to all the members of Central that donated their time and other resources to make the 2020 Christmas for Troops mission project a big success! On November 28th 125 stockings were delivered to the NC Packs 4 Troops Organization to be delivered to the men and women

Christmas Happenings

December 18th: Christmas Caroling

December 23 at 7 pm: The Christmas Story "Do not be afraid."

December 24 at 7 pm: Christmas Eve Service

**Remember in Prayer:
All TPS and DACA persons
and those suffering from
COVID-19, pray for a vaccine.**