

MOMENTS Matter

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2023
NEWSLETTER



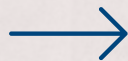
EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

REHOBOTH BEACH, DE

REASON FOR THE SEASON

In addition to Jesus being the reason for the season, find out how meaningful the Christmas holiday is for some of our members.

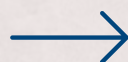
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BEHIND THE SCENES

Meet the Governing Board members and learn about how their commitment to Epworth ensures the overall well-being of our church and its ministries.

[READ MORE](#)



EXPLORE FAITH EMBRACE COMMUNITY

Welcome to Epworth, a church with open doors, open minds and open hearts! This is not just a slogan for us. Together we're striving to become a church of radical hospitality, extravagant generosity, passionate worship, risk-taking service, and intentional faith development. You are important in helping us live into this vision that God has for us!

CONNECT WITH US!

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INNOVATE FOR LOVE

REV. DR. VICKI GORDY-STITH

LEAD PASTOR



Wow—what a year we have had at Epworth! You all totally ROCK and we continue to Explore Faith and Embrace Community together. Thank you! I love being in town and hearing people’s response when I tell them I pastor Epworth. Everyone sings Epworth’s praises, and I wholeheartedly agree in reply.

We have accomplished much this year. During the first six months, we focused on Transformation; since July, we have been focusing on Thriving. These themes arose from the **Source Collaborative**, as we explore how to innovate in order to thrive. This summer, the teams laid the foundation for our initiatives: Youth and Families@Epworth, Online Community@Epworth, and Learning Community@Epworth. Each group assembled teams and began to plan and work toward specific goals.

Our Youth and Families team began “Meet Me@Epworth,” a ministry with special needs young people, to offer social and spiritual connections to each other. The team also has plans to collaborate with a woman who patented a program which explains cancer to children. They are additionally exploring partnering with Conley’s Church to support Camp Hope, an eight-week free summer camp for disadvantaged children.

Our Online Community team continues to meet to create connections between the people who worship online and those who worship onsite. They have improved the live stream experience, including prerecorded announcements, and being intentional about greeting and including the online congregation. The team has researched some ways to connect the online and onsite community through chat apps, separate from Facebook or YouTube. We have started with **GroupMe**. To join, download the GroupMe app and search for “Epworth Worship Chat.” We hope to begin using it during Advent to see if it works. We expect to use it to raise prayers, to greet one another, and to comment on worship.

Our Learning Community team has worked to narrow down their focus. They hope to have people from inside and outside the church join us for these learning events, creating a safe space for people to connect. Ideally, these connections will result in



relationships which span the political, religious, socio-economic, and cultural divide, among others. The events include American Sign Language (ASL) to be taught by our own Barbara Simpson; an author series to begin with Murray Archibald’s brother, John Archibald, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author; and some sessions on leadership, with the initial ones taught by our Lay Leader, Todd Popham, whose profession includes coaching and training leaders.

At a recent Source Collaborative meeting, we shared some wisdom from Kenda Creasy Dean’s book, *Innovating for Love: Joining God’s Expedition through Christian Social Innovation*, to remind us of our motivation. I wanted to share some of the quotes with you, because although we have a small team leading the innovation, we know that any success will arise from congregational engagement.

Before he embodied ministry, Jesus embodied love, receiving each person as whole, beloved children of God, radically reframing how human longings, losses, and limitations should be addressed... “Ministry starts with Who—the God who loves us, and those whom God sends us to love.”

“Innovating for love means chasing God’s vision for creation rather than ours, which requires us to hold our ideas for ministry loosely, giving the Holy Spirit room to rearrange our plans let we drive ourselves (or others) into the ground. Love eclipses our need to succeed. Innovative ministries may flop, mutate adapt, change, or fall away. But love never fails.”

“Innovation is the by-product of love, for God and for us. We are never more imaginative than when we are in love, finding new ways to delight our beloved; we are never more creative than when trying to address our children’s suffering... congregations must begin to understand themselves as **incubators of ongoing innovation.**”

“For Jesus, the route to such flourishing [read: thriving] is love...” Won’t you join us in our efforts to innovate for love? We need you, and so does God!

IT'S ALL IN THE LYRICS

JAMIE FORSHEY

One of my most favorite traditions at this time of the year is to dig out my treasured Christmas CDs (Yes, I still own those relics!), play them as loud as I can and sing my heart out as if none of my neighbors can hear the utter chaos.

Although I have several go-to albums, my prized possession is the *Amy Grant: A Christmas Album* CD that I have been jamming to since my sophomore year in high school (circa 1983). Each song brings me absolute joy and as you might suspect, I know every single word to each song; however, *Emmanuel* strikes me each time I hear it. For me, it's not just the power in the music; it's the lyrics that I love belting out at the top of my lungs! There is only a short chorus that is repeated over and over throughout the entire song, but it is perfect: Pure truth, just as the Bible tells us.

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel
Wonderful Counselor
Lord of Life, Lord of All
He's the Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Holy One
Emmanuel, Emmanuel*

As I listened to this tune last week while driving, I began to think about the many names that have been given to Jesus and why.

I did not have a complete understanding of the some specifics related to this topic so I did what any geeky girl would naturally do---I consulted my BFF: Google! Regardless of the source, what I discovered was quite fascinating and worth sharing with other believers. So, here goes it---my rendition, with a little help from my friend...

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah recorded the information revealed to him regarding the circumstances of Christ's coming. One such prophecy, found in the book of Isaiah, gives us in just a few words a wealth of knowledge about the Savior and the roles He plays in our lives and in our Heavenly Father's plan.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6).

That said, Jesus has been given various titles that reflect different aspects of his identity and importance. These titles are used in Christian theology and scripture to convey the multifaceted nature of Jesus' identity and his significance in the Christian faith.

Emmanuel: In the opening chapter of his narrative, Matthew tells of a messiah who will be called "Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" and also be called "Emmanuel, which means "God with us".

Wonderful Counselor: The word "wonderful" comes from the Hebrew word for "miracle," suggesting both the Messiah's miraculous birth and the miracles He would perform during His life. The word counselor has to do with the commandments and teachings the Messiah would bring to Earth in order to guide us back to our Heavenly Father.



Lord of Life, Lord of All: Christ is Lord over all because he is God. At one point, Jesus explained to his Apostles, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Jesus Christ is the light and life of the world, our Savior and our Redeemer.

Prince of Peace: Jesus is the only reason we can truly live peacefully with God. He is called the "Prince of Peace" because He restores every broken relationship, provides a well-ordered and balanced life while offering the the assurance of eternal life.

John 14:27 states: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Mighty God: "Mighty" is a translation of the Hebrew word "gibbor," which is defined as "strength, power, hero, warrior." Isaiah 9:6 tells us that Jesus is El Gibbor, the God of Strength, the God of Power, God our Hero, and God our Warrior.

Holy One: The title "Holy One" means that Jesus is infinitely and absolutely holy, fully and perfectly divine. He is transcendent and majestic. He came down from above to save sinners, yet He is set apart from sinners in that He is completely sinless, perfect in all of His ways!

Just wow! Who would have ever thought that a song containing a mere 21 words would become a Top 20 Christian radio single on an album that peaked in the Top Ten of the Christian charts and eventually became certified Gold in 1985 and Platinum in 1989...? Super cool, for sure!

Aside from these honors, I feel confident in stating that I believe Amy Grant's most impressive accomplishment associated with the song *Emmanuel* is the extraordinary impact its message has had on generations---one of peace, unconditional love and the eternal life Jesus offers to each and every one of us through his birth, death and resurrection.

Be sure to give this timeless classic a listen. I have a feeling you will hit the replay button a few times, too! And if you really want to get crazy, you can purchase your very own official Amy Grant CD on eBay for as low as \$6.99---with free shipping. You're welcome for the Christmas gift idea!

As the season of Advent is upon us, may you always feel the love and hope of Jesus Christ. May the light of the world illuminate your path and perform miracles in your life. Most importantly, may you find peace that passes all understanding in knowing that the Savior of mankind is all you will ever need! ♥

References: biblestudytools.com; www.churchofjesuschrist.org; Smith's Bible Dictionary; Google AI Search Engine



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GOVERNING BOARD

LINDA KAUFFMAN

Many years ago, a group of church leaders set a course to define a new mission statement and redefine the goals of Epworth. Over the course of about a year, we established the four main ministry groups and redefined the Church Council to be the Governing Board that we have now. It was out of this effort that “Exploring Faith and Embracing Community” was born.

During this time, we determined that a smaller group to lead the church was needed and the present-day Governing Board consisting of 12 members was created.

This group is responsible for the overall well-being of the church. We do not get deeply involved in day-to-day operation but rather, look at the bigger picture and develop policies and procedures for the whole of the church. One article put it this way... “Leadership Boards are not supposed to handle all the rocks and pebbles, only the big rocks. These are things like values, mission, vision, ministry initiatives, the spiritual leadership of the congregation, policies, and the overall church health.”



I have been asked by many over the years about becoming a member of the Board. Here are some key attributes we look for in potential and current church leaders:

- **Motivated:** The team needs to want your mission to be successful.
- **Cooperative:** We want leaders willing to work with anyone who volunteers their time and energy.
- **Independent:** When asked to complete a project, the leader should be able to complete it without having their hand held, after having had the proper training.
- **Devoted:** This attribute is purely spiritual. The team must possess a devotion to Christ.
- **Teachable:** Every Christian is a disciple, and leaders should be more so.

When the concept of the Board was developed, we wanted to be sure we had all the components that operate within the church fully represented on the board. This was to ensure positive coordination when making decisions. To that end, the board is comprised of the four lay leaders of the four ministries that include Inviting, Belonging, Connecting and Caring, the current Lay Leader, the Chairs of the three main Committees (Finance, SPRC and Trustees) the two pastors, a recording secretary, and the Chair.

So WHO is on the current Board?

- Murray Archibald – Leads the Connecting Ministry
- Bob Joynson – Leads the Inviting Ministry
- Val Linder – Leads the Caring Ministry
- Linda BenderHilt – Leads the Belonging Ministry
- David Hagelin – Chairs Finance
- Bunny Maher – Chairs Trustees
- Sandy Pierce - Chairs SPRC
- Todd Popham – Lay Leader
- Pat Johnson – Recording Secretary
- Pastor Vicki Gordy-Stith
- Pastor Bo Gordy-Stith
- Linda Kauffman – Chair of Governing Board

Continued on next page...



Finance. This is intended to help in the coordination of church-wide issues.

As stated, the Governing Board develops church-wide policy. In the past, many 'policies' were not in written format and relied on memory or past practice to determine how to proceed. In the last three years, the Board has strived to develop and document those policies as well as new ones. Some examples of recent ones are as follows:

* During COVID, the Board met regularly to determine whether to open or close, develop protocols around Covid infections, determine mask mandates and overall strategy for keeping the church open and active but safe. In addition, as the church reopened as Covid began to lessen in intensity, process and procedures were developed for a smooth transition of fully opened and active.

* Developed guidelines for the creation and approval of new ministries. Ministries may require church resources, insurance requirements, and space needs, just to name a few. The purpose of the new request form for creating a new ministry is to ensure that all the affected parties are included and/or evaluated in the process.

* Developed processes and approval procedures for fund raising. Raising monies in the name of Epworth requires some oversight and much transparency. To that end, the Board created a format for requesting events. The main goal of fund raising events should be to the benefit of the entire church. By creating a process, greater transparency with funds being given in the name of the church was established.

* Developed policies regarding signatures on documents that have an impact on the church. This includes applications for grants, any document that has legal implications or ramifications, etc.

* In addition to policies, the Board works with the Trustees to evaluate, support and approve physical changes to the church. The proposed Electronic Sign is an example of this.

The Board welcomes any input from anyone in the congregation. We serve the church and want to be as open and available as possible. I am willing to schedule meetings or phone calls whenever the need arises. I can be contacted at the following: lkauffman@verizon.net or 302.853.2303.

THE WEAPONS OF GOD

EPHESIANS 6:10-11; 13-17

And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way.

Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet.

Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon.



This song, by Hezekiah Walker, is one of Susan Jimenez's favorites because "It always warms my heart, especially when our Praise Team brings it to Sunday morning worship. Praise God!". Check it out here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOFBb6hnwTo>

JESUS: THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

JAMIE FORSHEY

During the holiday season, Christians around the world embrace the phrase "Jesus is the Reason for the Season" as a poignant reminder of the spiritual significance behind Christmas. This declaration underscores the belief that the true essence of the festivities lies in commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. For Christians, the season is not merely about exchanging gifts and festive decorations but serves as an opportunity to reflect on the teachings of Jesus, which include love, compassion, and good-will to name a few. By acknowledging Jesus as the reason for the season, individuals seek to center their celebrations around the profound impact of his life and the timeless message of hope and redemption associated with His birth in Bethlehem.



So, of course, Jesus is the reason for the season, but wait--- there's more! Although Christ's birthday is of utmost importance, many individuals find other traditions at this time of year to be very meaningful as well. Check out what a few of the most lovely people at Epworth had to say about their "Reasons for the Season":

- **Rev. Debbie Scott:** Traditions and memories, from church to home and family are meaningful to me. Traditions bring memories to mind and heart. They celebrate what has been, and as we continue to share those traditions, they invite the possibility of what may be with an expanded circle beyond our birth family. For this Italian, it brings great tidings of comfort and joy!
- **Rob Cee:** I love the Christmas carols, the candlelight church services, and the peacefulness of slowly falling snow on Christmas Eve. I love the feeling of goodwill toward others, sharing Christmas greetings not only with friends but with strangers as well, the Christmas cards, and the presents under the tree. But most of all, I enjoy being with family and friends at this time of year.
- **Roger Truitt:** I really enjoy and find the Christmas Eve services at Epworth I attend with family to be meaningful. I also like to see the excitement of the little grandkids opening presents and blowing out the candles on "Jesus's birthday cake" that we decorate with a small nativity placed on top.
- **Dick & Martha Coyle:** Perhaps the most significantly joyful Christmas was the birth of our first child in December 1977, arriving home with him on the 23rd and literally "placing him under our Christmas tree." However, scrolling through the years, we are always struck by the obvious contagious "Christmas spirit" that arrives in December...for believers and non-believers alike!
- **Robin Duer:** What is meaningful to me is the increased number of opportunities for fellowship within our church family and with other Christians at this time of year. We celebrate Jesus' birthday together in so many ways, whether it is joyfully providing for people less fortunate with food and gifts, enjoying music at holiday concerts, or raising money for church outreach with a yummy cookie exchange. Life is more meaningful when we all gather together and have fun!
- **Linda BenderHilt:** What I find most meaningful at this time of the year is the abundance of the Christmas spirit. Everyone seems so happy/cheerful, nice/polite, and generous! I wish that the Christmas spirit would last throughout the year!
- **Mickey Hoffman:** As a Christian minister, every day is Christmas for me. Whenever I pray the first thing I do is thank God for the gift of his son. This time of the year is so special for me because I am still a kid at heart. I remember waking up on Christmas morning with my four other brothers and sitting at the top of the stairs seeing the lights reflecting off the tree, hearing the trains running and asking can we come down now. My birthday is a week before Christmas so on my birthday, we would all pile into the station wagon and ride around looking at all of the Christmas lights. I so look forward to decorating the outside of my house. I pray that I never grow up and always have a child like heart every day of the year.



A BLUE CHRISTMAS

MICKIE MCMANAMON

What is a Blue Christmas Service? No, it is not connected to the song Elvis made popular... So please know this song is not the center piece of this service!

For those who suffered a loss and are grieving, the holidays can accentuate feelings of sadness. Being surrounded by happy Christmas carols and holiday parties may cause people to mask their feelings or even create some shame around having them. However, when a loved one is no longer present to celebrate the holiday, there is often guilt, sadness, and loneliness.

A Blue Christmas service can offer some healing and hope. The idea behind the Blue Christmas service is to create space for the acknowledgment of the heaviness often carried during this season as well as offering the hope that Jesus gives. The Bible clearly acknowledges, celebrates, and makes space for pain, struggle, hardship, and tears---and so should we.

A Blue Christmas service is a quiet, contemplative service that usually happens on the evening of December 21, the winter solstice. This day, which has the longest night and the shortest day, is symbolic of our darker nights when we find ourselves grieving, lonely, or longing for something better.

The Blue Christmas service is all about making space during a season, noisy with celebration, to acknowledge the “both/and” of our emotions. It’s an avenue of making space for beautiful pastoral care and compassionate community for those who are struggling.

This is the caring setting that Epworth designed for those struggling during the holiday season. We make space for anyone grieving, lonely or longing for that which is missing for them this Christmas.

Come and join us online Thursday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m.!

Scan the QR code to the right to access the link for the service.



If you would like us to light a candle during the service for your loved one, send their name to Mickie McManamon at the following email: mmcmcnamon@epworth.faith.

SHARING GOD'S LOVE
FROM THE EUMC WEB SITE & FB PAGE

We thank God for our community ministry partners who helped us fill over 500 Thanksgiving Boxes to distribute to our hungry neighbors!

Read about these acts of kindness in the Cape Gazette:

- [Hawkseye neighbors hold Thanksgiving food drive for Epworth pantry.](#)
- [Historic Lewes Farmers Market donates Thanksgiving turkeys](#)

A special shout out to all of the Preschool families who generously donated food that helped fill the community Thanksgiving boxes distributed by the Food Rescue team at EUMC!



THE EPWORTH PLANT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

SUSAN JIMENEZ



What began with the idea of creating a memorial rock garden blossomed into an overhaul of the plants that create a warm and welcoming atmosphere at Epworth. And thus, the plant improvement project began!

The goal of this endeavor was to improve the health and well-being of the plants located outside the sanctuary with a focus on the diseased and/or failing plants and to reposition and replace plants as needed. Windsor and I selected plants that were hardy, low maintenance plants with a variety of sizes and variegation. This area was specifically designated as a Memorial Garden for Barb Rowe, a long-time member of Epworth and our choir, who passed on November 9, 2023.

During the second phase, Jimmy Windsor and I identified plants in the bed adjacent to the music room that should be removed and replaced them with plants like the first bed. We included a beautiful and very unique tree into this design, a Norfolk pine.

Be sure to take a look at this outstanding specimen!

In the final phase of the project, we had a team of volunteers, the "Plant Brigade", work on the peace lilies in the sanctuary. Most of these lilies were installed when we moved into this church and still showed signs of active growth. So, we conducted a deep pruning followed by aggressive fertilizing and developed a plan for continued watering. We turned the plants to account for the phototropism (the phenomenon by which plants bend in the direction of light) and put the best sides facing into the sanctuary. In addition, I purchased two water meters to measure the plants' water level, which will guide us in the amount of water needed.

There have been numerous volunteer hours for this project. John Hilt and I have been covering the watering of plants so far, but we need additional volunteers for this ongoing job. If you are interested in becoming a part of the "Plant Brigade", please reach out to me at saj19971@gmail.com. We are seeking volunteers twice a month for watering purposes.

Just as a point of interest, I am a plant person, having studied botany in college, and in my early career, cared for plants at the Australian Embassy in Washington, DC. I've enjoyed working with all of the plants inside and outside the office area. Windsor Florist gave us a great price for all the products; Jimmy has been very responsive to our needs.

We hope you enjoy the new foliage as much as we found pleasure in completing this amazing project!

According to Psalm 92:12-13, "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God" (ESV). The psalmist compares those who are planted in the house of God to a strong and vibrant tree.

FROM THE BAG LADIES

BY GAIL GINGRICH

The Epworth "Bag Ladies" have been very busy since the last newsletter. In addition to the first Sunday of the month, we sold bags at The Delmarva Chicken festival in Salisbury, and at the Southern Delaware Therapeutic Riding in Milton. In preparation for our sales, we had two very productive sew-ins. We have two new sources for bags in Maryland providing us with chicken bags, dog and cat bags, deer bags, and some adorable goat bags.

We sold 44 bags at the Chicken Festival and 28 at the SDTR event. Our sales on the first Sunday is usually about 2-5 bags. We are continuing to look for venues to sell our bags.

Our group will be donating \$300 to Soul Ministries and \$300 to Shepard's Office in December. Both organizations are located in Georgetown.

Our individual machines are taking a beating sewing on the polypropylene. We have successfully tried the Singer Heavy Duty Machine which is inexpensive and has had good reviews. The WINGS (Women in God's Service) will purchase two machines and two of our members are purchasing two machines. We have an older version of the heavy duty Singer that was donated a while back. We will then have five machines to sew the bags. So far the Singers have performed well!

We will also be sewing t-shirt bags for the J1 dinners this summer. We need more people to sew. This type of bag is very simple to make. There are important tasks that are non-sewing in nature.

If you are interested in either project or both, please contact Gail Gingrich at gvingrich@gmail.com or text at 302.344.3596.



LOVE YOUR MOTHER EARTH

BY BOB PAULEN

"In the beginning, God..." (Gen. 1:1-ff.) "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." (I Cor. 10:26). Both the Old and New Testaments affirm the gift of creation and our stewardship thereof. What a beautiful, wonderful gift we have been given! In

this season of gifting, part of our responsibility is the preservation of the planet, our island home. We are co-creators in this process with our God.

Frankly, we have not been very good stewards. The climate is moving into uncharted territory after months of record heat. We are plagued by extreme weather, tornadoes, hurricanes, melting glaciers, oceans drowning in plastics (550,000 tons a year!), etc. We are falling behind the environmental goals our country and the world have set.

Yet, we have the "good news" as well---both from creation and from human endeavor. Did you know that there is a "twilight zone" between 650 and 3,000 feet in the ocean where small mesopelagic fish are helping to save our planet? They capture about as much carbon as the U.S. emits each year! How marvelous is God's creation! You and I also can help the planet move toward carbon neutrality by the simple act of giving life affirming gifts this holiday season. More specifically, by planting, preserving, and/or gifting trees. Trees are the most carbon friendly living things on earth. Plant a tree, watch it grow, enrich the environment, remember God's gifts to us and be grateful! May it be said of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:23).



NEWS FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL

LINDA BENDERHILT



We are delighted to continue our Sunday School program here at Epworth for our children. The age group is for kindergarten through fifth grade. Our goal is to help our children learn and grow in Christian faith through education, music, worship, service projects and fellowship. We continue to enjoy our curriculum, Deep Blue Rotation Stations! Through the Deep Blue rotation model, children experience Bible stories in a variety of ways (such as art, cooking, games, missions, music, science, spiritual practices and storytelling) as they explore monthly themes. As a result, each Bible story and its meaning will stay with them for life. Children have the opportunity to be creative and give thanks for all the important things God has made. They will learn how God cares for us all!

Parent Reminders:

1. Please ask your children to pick up their name tags from the narthex before the service.
2. Please no toys, games, electronics, or phones. In the past this has become a disruption to the teaching and the children.

We completed our rotation stations on The Lord's Prayer (the story of Jesus teaching the disciples to pray), and all received a poster keepsake; The Creation Story (how God created the earth, and it was good) and David and Goliath (how David beat Goliath with God's help).

We will be finishing our Fall rotation station during the month of November (12, 19, 26, 12/3) with The Wise King. Children will hear the story of God granting Solomon wisdom. The Bible Story: 1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:1-15; Proverbs 6:6-8; 10:1; 17:17. Focus Bible Verse: God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding. 1 Kings 4:29. The Anchor Point: We can ask God for what we need. The children will: discover that Solomon asked God for wisdom, and God granted it and will learn that we can ask God for what we need, just like Solomon.

December focuses on Talks with the Teacher. The children will hear the story of Jesus at age 12 talking with the teachers in the temple. The Bible Story: Luke 2:39-52. Focus Bible Verse: "Jesus matured in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and with People." (Luke 2:52). The children will: discover that Jesus learned many things as he grew, just as they do, and will learn that Jesus was once a child who then grew up, just as they are growing. Our upcoming rotation stations for the Winter are Jesus is Baptized, January (1/7-1/28) and The Good Samaritan February (2/4-2/25).

We have a talented group of volunteer teachers and assistants to guide the children through each story throughout the year. However, we are always on the lookout for extra hands. The curriculum is extremely easy to step right into and teach; no training is necessary! The rotation is once every four weeks. So, if you love working with kids, please consider becoming a Sunday School teacher or assistant, you will get so much out of this experience!

Please contact Linda BenderHilt at 717-209-0271 if you would like to become a volunteer. You can also reach out to Linda and/or Gwen Osborne 443-745-6950 with any questions.

A Message from Adam Emel-Firestone:

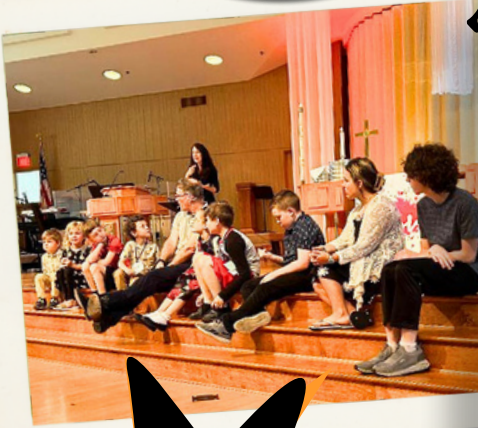
Calling all shepherds, sheep, cattle, angels, wise people, and townspeople!

We will be doing a small skit for the Family Christmas Eve Service being held on December 24 at 5:00 p.m. We will be preparing two songs for this event: Happy Birthday Jesus and Prepare the Way, which we will practice at Sunday School. We will also share the YouTube links for this music as well.

In addition, we are planning to have a dress rehearsal on December 17. Stay tuned for additional details... Blessings!



**THE
FUTURE
OF EPWORTH
LIVES HERE!**



CHRISTMAS JOY 365

SUE BRENTON

Christmas Joy 365 's mission is to provide Christmas for underserved children in the Cape Henlopen School District. We work through our community contacts to get names of children who would not have a Christmas without help from outside groups.

At Epworth, we put up the giving tree with tags that have information about each child: their age, gender and their Christmas wishes.

We ask members of the congregation and folks outside of the church to

take a tag or two or three, whatever they can afford. These individuals purchase the gift(s) and return them to the church by the deadline, unwrapped with the tag attached. We then prepare the gifts to be delivered to the drop-off locations.

Epworth also provides financial assistance to families throughout the year for emergency services (i.e. assistance with bills for heating and electric).

To fund this ministry, we will hold two fundraisers: Breakfast with Santa and our big event, the Annual Epworth Cookie Walk. We depend on the congregation to help us with these events!

Please mark these dates on your calendar:

- Breakfast with Santa: December 2
- Annual Cookie Walk: December 16

The Christmas Joy committee is looking for folks to join us! We have a need to train folks to be a point of contact for the school system and West Rehoboth Community Center. We also need members to help us with the activities associated with this ministry. It is a great undertaking and is much more involved than outlined above.

If your heart has a calling to help kids have a few gifts under the tree, then we need YOU! Please contact Sue Brenton at myshadow143@verizon.net.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT ANOTHER
EPWORTH OUTREACH MINISTRY**



FUNDRAISING UPDATE

LINDA BENDERHILT

Epworth is very fortunate to have a wonderful fundraising committee that is actively involved in organizing various events throughout the year. These successful efforts make a significant impact on supporting numerous initiatives and projects within the church community--- and beyond!

Our mission statement is as follows: Our purpose/focus is to raise monetary funds to assist in supporting Epworth's vision: Explore faith and embrace community, which also aligns with the church's mission and values: Inviting all to walk in God's way, belonging to each other, connecting God and caring for one another and our community. We also strive to be a loving community who embraces all people and engages our neighbors and the greater community.

That said, the Fundraising Committee consisting of Sue Brenton (chair), Linda BenderHilt (recording secretary), David Hagelin, Jeanne Jefsten, Penny MacLennan, Loretta Mahan, Susan Selph, and David Streit, have been really busy. Read on to learn more about recent and upcoming events created to enhance the Epworth experience while funding several outreach programs.

- **An Evening of Music and Art** held on **Friday, October 27** was a huge success. It not only was a fun night for all, the event raised nearly \$7,000 as well!
- **Breakfast with Santa** will be held on **Saturday, December 2 from 9:00–10:30 a.m.** Tickets are \$4.00 for children and \$6.00 for adults. The menu will include pancakes, eggs, breakfast meats, bagels, fruit, and beverages. You won't want to miss the super cool Santa who also knows sign language! RSVP here:
- **Yule Love It!** returns to the Epworth stage! After a three-year hiatus, this Christmas festival is coming back s - bigger and better than ever! Featured in the two-act concert on **Sunday, December 10 at 3:00 p.m.** is the Epworth Chancel Choir presenting Joseph Martin's A Celebration of Carols, which will be accompanied by an organ, a wind quintet, and the Epworth Bell Choir. The Epworth Praise Team and Band will open Act II by singing contemporary carols, followed by the CAMP Rehoboth Alliance Singers with traditional sacred and secular selections. The concert will conclude with a community sing-along of joyous holiday favorites. The production is under the direction of Doug Yetter, Epworth's Minister of Music and Artistic Director of the CAMP Rehoboth Chorus and Alliance Singers.

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased in advance or at the door. There may even be a surprise visit from Santa! Refreshments will be available.

- The **Cookie Walk and Christmas Bazaar** will be held on **Saturday, December 16 at 8:00 a.m.** This annual event will be held in the Narthex. In addition to cookies (\$10.00 per pound), we will be selling four varieties of homemade soup by the quart: Chicken Noodle, Vegetable Beef, Vegetarian Lentil (\$10), and Red Crab (\$15). The proceeds will benefit the annual Christmas Joy drive.
- And last but not least: **Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Come one, come all!** will be held on **Saturday, January 20, 2024 from 4-7:00 p.m.** The theme of our first dinner will be "Spaghetti". The menu will include spaghetti (of course!) with sauce, garlic bread, salad, dessert, and drink. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$6 for ages 4-12 and under four eat free!

The Fundraising Committee is exploring other potential fundraisers for 2024 such as bringing back the golf tournament in the fall and hosting strawberry and watermelon festivals in the spring/summer!

Members of the committee welcome your thoughts and ideas.



THE DOV MISSION

SUSAN JIMENEZ



The Daily Office Volunteers Program (DOVs) was re-established in August 2023 and has been operating continuously since then. Our mission is to provide office coverage Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and in emergency situations. Our basic assignments are:

- * Providing general information and answers to questions about Epworth UMC and its programs to callers
- * Entering data into various administrative systems

- * Greeting and directing visitors
- * Being the “face” of Epworth UMC to all who come or call
- * Forwarding messages to appropriate staff
- * Assisting with mailings/handouts/flyers/weekly bulletins

Each volunteer completed a two-hour training session which provided specific information about the phone system and the electronic door operation as well as key personnel and Frequently Asked Questions. We continue to build a “Body of Knowledge” so that we can provide up-to-date answers to questions that arise.

The DOVs use the DOV Handbook, the Church Directory and the EUMC website as resource materials. Each volunteer works a 3-hour shift, from 10-1 or 1-4.

We welcome additional volunteers to join our team—contact Susan Jiménez, saj19971@gmail.com if you are interested!

The 2023 DOV are:

Nancy Almacy
Robin Duer
Colleen Lopresto

Samantha Benfield
Adam Emel-Firestone
Dorothe Mumford (Doro)

Cathy Benson
Marti Garrett
Kay Sullivan

Rick Buske
Susan Jiménez
Lynne Wilmer

A GOD READ JAMIE FORSHEY

What would happen if we called on God for help and God actually appeared? In Mitch Albom’s novel of faith, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*, a group of shipwrecked passengers pull a strange man from the sea. He claims to be “the Lord” and says he can only save them if they all believe in him.

Intrigue. Curiosity. Hope. This uplifting book was worth every second of my time, and it would be well worth yours as well! The story has such a profound message, but you have no idea how much until you have finished reading it. Then you become “Godsmacked” and cannot stop talking about it. What a great discussion it provokes! And it’s an excellent read-aloud too. Overall, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat* is a highly recommended novel, one that could be an excellent gift for family members and friends!



ADVENT EXPLAINED

BY JAMIE FORSHEY



So, what is Advent anyway...? An AI Google search returned the following: Advent is a four-week season in the Christian calendar that begins on the Sunday closest to November 30. It's a time to anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and to prepare for his second coming. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival".

But it doesn't end there... Advent is also the beginning of the spiritual year for some churches. During this time, Christians reflect on themes of hope, peace, joy and love. Of course, we all know that Google University is the "gospel" so there you have it!

I also asked Google to list some symbols that represent Advent. The answer included a few items, along with the why behind their use in relationship to Advent, which I found to be super cool---and quite informative.

- Advent wreath: The pine, holly, and yew represent immortality, while the cedar represents strength and healing. The pine cones symbolize life and resurrection.
- Advent candles: The four colored candles represent the four weeks of Advent. One candle is lit each Sunday during this time. The flames represent the approaching Christmas light, which brings hope and peace. The candles also respectively symbolize hope, peace, joy, and love. These candles are lit in sequence each week of the Advent season. The first, second and fourth candles are purple; the third candle is rose-colored. A fifth white candle, often referred to as the "Christ Candle" is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Did you know that there is significance related to the colors of these candles...? The purple candles reflect penance while the rose-colored candle represents joyfulness. The color white is for purity because our Christ is our sinless, pure Savior.

- Advent calendars: Who could forget about these fun-filled holiday gems...? Traditionally, these calendars have been used to count down the days of Advent in anticipation of Christmas. They typically have moveable parts marked with the numbers 1 to 24, representing the days in December before Christmas. The purpose of an Advent calendar is to move, remove or sometimes add a piece each day to visually gauge progress toward Christmas Day.

Advent calendars have their roots in the 19th century when German Protestants began taking creative steps to mark the days leading up to Christmas. Of course, they couldn't place an order on Amazon for a pop culture style calendar. Instead they used chalk marks on their doors and/or placed religious pictures on their walls to count down the days to Jesus' birth.

But that all changed in the early 1900s when the first mass produced Advent calendar was developed in Munich, Germany. Before long they had doors that opened, some contained religious images, and some had chocolate---for the children, or so they say!

That shift set the stage for modern-day Advent calendars, which have become very popular all across the world and now come in thousands of different varieties, themes and colors. An "Advent Calendar" search on Amazon yielded their top 100 best sellers within seconds... And then I literally scrolled through hundreds of additional choices!

From all sorts of candy to coffee, teas, charm bracelets, rubber duckies and yes, dog treats spanning popular brands, including Godiva, Disney, Crayola, Lego, National Geographic and many more, there seems to be an Advent calendar for everyone... Seriously!

Unfortunately, Advent calendars have lost some of their religious meaning over the years, but they can still be displayed all month, enjoyed with family, and of course, shared on social media!

In case anyone is wondering... My all-time favorite Advent calendar is the one with Reeses' Peanut Butter Cups behind each door!

Wishing you hope, peace, joy and love during this season of Advent... and always! ♥

MOMENTS *Matter*

HOPE

WORSHIP WITH US!



SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- On Site: 10:00 a.m.
Contemporary Worship
- Online Worship: Access these services via Epworth's Facebook page, YouTube or on the web at www.epworth.faith.
- Sunday School: Children 12 and under meet following Children's Time during Worship
- Youth Group: Middle and high school students meet 11:00 after Worship

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Join us on Sunday, December 24 for one of our Christmas worship services as we usher in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world!

- 10:00 a.m. ---> Advent 4
- 5:00 p.m. ---> Family Service, which includes a Children's Christmas Pageant
- 8:00 p.m. ---> Carols, Candlelight & Communion



Faith