

Peckville and Bradley Memorial United Methodist Charge Christmas 2006 News Letter

From The Pastors' Pen

Greetings In The Name Of Christ,

"A Man scatters seed on the ground," Jesus observed. "Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." (Mark 4: 26-29).

No wonder Pilgrims gave thanks. We thank God for a job to pay for our food—thousands are out of work. We thank God for a warm home and a table to eat at—homeless live out of their cars and the park. Thank you God, for the gifts you've given which we have no inherent right to. Make us genuinely grateful.

As we come to harvest time and to Thanksgiving we thank God for all the fruits of the earth. The harvest is plentiful, Jesus says to the disciples in Luke chapter ten. The harvest that Jesus is talking about here was a heavenly harvest of the people that God prepares to believe in Christ and receive forgiveness and eternal life. The harvest is plentiful in our days too and again it is God, not us, who is preparing people for faith and life in Christ.

One of the blessings of being a pastor is seeing the harvest being gathered firsthand. I thank God for all of you and I rejoice every time another person comes to the church for worship, for Bible study, for confirmation classes. In these things the harvest is growing.

With every harvest comes a celebration of thanksgiving. Our churches have been blessed with two wonderful events of thanksgiving: Peckville United Methodist Church celebrated its One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary; Bradley Memorial celebrated with Nancy McClain in completing the Lay Speaker course.

I'm glad Thanksgiving comes when it does in the calendar, usually a few days before Advent. It feels like the official opening of Christmas. The following poem was written by Huub Oosterhuis, and I thought it would be meaningful to you as we prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus.

"At last, night is ending,

The day is drawing near.

The people living in the night

Will see the long-awaited light.

Rising in the darkness from afar,

It shines on them, the morning star.

The Son of Man will come once more,

Not as a child, obscure and poor;

Only the Father knows the day,

All we must do is watch and pray.

Though sun and moon may cease to shine,

We who believe will know His sign:

In the winter when the tree seems dead,

We have to hope and look ahead

To the green branch that will appear

When summer and new life is near.

Exposed to every wind and storm,

Deprived of beauty and of form,

But we who live in faith know well

That branch is called Emmanuel.

God with us is a living name,

God will not put our faith to shame,

If we are open to receive

The Son in whom we all believe.

At last, night is ending,

The day is drawing near.”

The entire season of Christmas and the time leading up to Christmas is joyful for many people. It is a time in which we reach out to others, enjoy our family, exchange gifts with those we love, and remember the birth of Jesus. It is important that our faith takes center stage during this holiday season. Jesus was well known for giving attention and serving those who felt they were on the perimeter of society. We are called to do likewise. We must be careful not to become too wrapped up in our own tasks and life that we ignore opportunities to bring joy to others. We are to keep our eyes and ears alert for ways we can extend God's love to those we encounter.

The coming birth of Jesus invites us to come and see. The coming birth of Jesus invites us to be ready and waiting. The birth of Jesus invites us to share God's love to all. The coming birth of Jesus is a time to bring celebration to those who feel no celebration. The coming birth of Jesus is a time that changes us all. The coming birth of Jesus tell us how much God loves you and me.

Blessings,

Pastor Sharon and Fred

Advent

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

Christmas Food Baskets

We will start collecting food for the food baskets at Christmas for the needy on Sunday November 26th. Please do your part to help those less fortunate than us.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

This years Thanksgiving Service will be held at The Peckville United Methodist Church. On Wednesday evening, **November 22th at 7:00p.m.**

Thanksgiving Morning Service

There will be a Thanksgiving service at the Bradley Memorial Church at 9:00a.m. on Thanksgiving morning, November 23

The Colors of Advent

Historically, the primary sanctuary color of Advent is Purple. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. Purple is still used in Catholic churches. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. In many churches the third Sunday remains the Sunday of Joy marked by pink or rose. However, most Protestant churches now use blue to distinguish the Season of Advent from Lent. Royal Blue is sometimes used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use Bright Blue to symbolize the night sky, the anticipation of the impending announcement of the King's coming, or to symbolize the waters of Genesis 1, the beginning of a new creation.

FROM THE FINANCE CHAIRPERSON

It's hard to believe that the Christmas season is so near. It is the by far the busiest and most stressful time of the year. The dictionary describes stress as pressure; mental or physical tension or strain. In physics, tension is a system of forces producing or sustaining a strain. How can we eliminate the stress and pressure at Christmas? Maybe we should stop and look at the true meaning of Christmas – The main part of the word is “Christ”.

If possible we should slowdown, take a deep breath and let the joy of giving be a guide to this holiday season.

When looking ahead to the holiday season let us not forget our church o your Christmas list. The church is by far the most important part of the season –

without the church or churches in general, life would be without purpose.

As I have said before, the expenses of the church are not exempt from a due date – so please remember to be generous with your gift.

This is usually a good month for church contributions – but we still need your support throughout the year. As Paul Lucas reported at the last board meeting, the expenses of our church are more than our income. Also remember the commitment we made when we joined the church, to support it with our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service. Have a great Christmas season!

Respectfully your, Bob Elvidge
Finance Chairperson

Church Conference

Our church conference will be held on Thursday, November 30 at the Peckville United Methodist Church. PPRC will meet at 6:15pm and the church Conference will be held at 7:00. This is your church conference please plan on attending.

The Spirit of Advent

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance!

Letters from the Lay Speakers

Greetings from Nancy McLain, the new Lay Speaker of Bradley Memorial UM Church.

I had the wonderful opportunity and experience of attending and "graduating from" the Basic Lay Speaking course for the Methodist Church. The course lasted a total of 6 weeks, and I met so many new and wonderful people, all from different churches in our District. What an eye opening experience! We learned how to put together a entire service, and do a sermon, which we each presented in front of our class. When Pastor Sharon asked me to do the complete

service on November 12, while she was away, I almost fell over! I was able to complete the task with the help of the Lectionary (and a very wonderful helper named Beth Taylor!), and it was so enjoyable to be able to select the hymns, scripture (one, out of three choices) and the topic for my sermon. I truly learned a great deal about the many ways our other charges reach out to help their local communities. I pray that you and your families will have a Blessed Advent season, and that you will keep Jesus Christ in your hearts throughout your many Christmas preparations AND celebrations. God Bless, Nancy

Too Busy for Respect:

Any of you who know me may have noticed that I have an obvious but undiagnosed problem with a short attention span. I could say that I am multitasking, but God and those close to me would know that I was lying.....
..... Aaaaah okay what was my point? Oh wait I remember, being busy and respect. By not giving the proper attention to people or things that I should, is really being disrespectful. But sometimes I just get sidetracked, I don't mean to. It just happens.

In the next 40 days or so there will be a plethora of distractions. Many of them will take us further away from what should be important as Christians. We may pay more attention to trappings of the season than their meaning. We all try to have perfect Thanksgiving dinner or the perfect Christmas party or Christmas dinner. You know like we see on TV. Sometimes we miss the point. The Thanksgiving celebration that brought us to where we are today was a celebration thanking God for life as well as a bountiful harvest. You see, in the 12 or so months the Pilgrims were in the "New World" more than half had die of hunger or disease. They knew what they were celebrating. 2000 years ago when Christ was born, the trapping of a king weren't there. There was a mother, a Child, a father, and animals in a barn.

All this isn't to say to do away with our turkey dinner, or Christmas decorations, or Christmas dinner. But to remind us that when we are asked to help with a service of thanksgiving, or caroling to those in nursing homes, or to distribute food basket to those who are in need. We can't be too busy to pay respect to those who have asked or those who are in need, whether the need is physical, emotional, or spiritual. After all Jesus is

never too busy for us. Remember if you have done it for the least of them, you have done it for Him.

Hopefully I stuck with my point, but if I didn't you'll know why.

Peace to all,
Tom Taylor

I have put myself on quit an educational journey over the last couple of years. I constantly find myself in a need to know why we do this and why we do that. That's basically why a couple of newsletters ago you learned so much about the sanctuary and the altar (candles, flowers, etc.) When I asked all the lay speakers to write something for this newsletter I started thinking about Advent and went strait to my computer and would like to share a little of what I found.

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival". The focus of course is the birth of Jesus Christ that we celebrate on Christmas. Advent is a time of expectation, anticipation, and preparation for that birth. But do we realize we should be spending much of our Advent like we do our Lent in prayer asking for the forgiveness of our sins, preparing for the King who had to be born and ultimately crucified for us.

In bible study we just started studying J. Ellsworth Kalas' "Christmas from the Back Side". We have done a few of his studies; he has a way of looking at the scripture, well from the back side. I loved what he said in the first chapter about the Advent Hymns. He says we don't really "get" Advent. When we sing, in a true Advent hymn, "from our sins and fears release us, let us find our rest in thee," we're inclined to sing it in a detached sort of way, not really applying it to ourselves. Advent songs are so often cast in a minor key, and with a slow, deliberate timing. They are the songs of longing and waiting.

This Advent season will you join me in making these Hymns your personal prayers of repentance, so when we arrive at Christmas and its beloved carols we may sing them with a renewed understanding that this IS the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ who was born and ultimately died to save us from our sins.

Please have a meaningful Advent and a joyful Christmas season, your sister in Christ - Beth

UMYF

If you are in 6th grade or older come and join us Sunday nights at 6:00 in the church fellowship room. fellowship, socializing, crafts, games

join us and enjoy helping the needy with game night for food basket enjoy the thrill and fellowship of Sky Lake. Hope to see you there. Parents are also welcome to join in events. Christ's Peace, Ron and Karen, Youth Advisors

UMYF making Hoagies

The youth will be making hoagies on Saturday, December 16th. Please call Ron or Karen Lucas at 383-1611.

Peckville Church Envelopes

If you do not receive church envelopes by the end of the year and wish to use envelopes, please contact Bonny Taylor, Finance Secretary at 489-6093

The Advent wreath

The circle of the wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. Candles symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The four outer candles represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The light of the candles itself becomes an important symbol of the season. The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6). The progression in the lighting of the candles symbolizes the various aspects of our waiting experience. As the candles are lighted over the four week period, it also symbolizes the darkness of fear and hopelessness receding and the shadows of sin falling away as more and more light is shed into the world. The flame of each new candle

reminds the worshippers that something is happening, and that more is yet to come. Finally, the light that has come into the world is plainly visible as the Christ candle is lighted at Christmas, and worshippers rejoice over the fact that the promise of long ago has been realized.

Christmas Memorials and Honoriums

Christmas gifts in memory of or in honor of may be given to the following funds.

- Memorial Fund – Bill Llewellyn
- Organ & Renovation – George Kinback Jr.
- Warring – Fendick Scholarship fund – George Kinback Jr.
- Music Fund – Bonny Taylor
- Poinsettias – Bob Elvidge or Bonny Taylor
- Sky Lake – Tom Taylor

To insure that your memorial or honorium is listed in the Christmas booklet, please have them in to the designated funds by Friday, December 15. This is a big help to the charge secretary and she thanks you for your cooperation.

Christmas Cookie Exchange

There will be a Christmas Cookie exchange/Pot Luck Luncheon on Saturday December 9th at 2:00P.M.at the Peckville United Methodist Church. EVERYONE is invited! There are a few simple rules to follow for the exchange: 1. Bring cookies that are easy to transport. 2. Bring a family favorite “Christmas Cookie” to share, (no chocolate chip unless they are out of this world unusual)!!! 3.Please bring at least 3 dozen of the kind you decide on so there is enough to go around. (It is ok to make more than one kind, the more the merrier)! 4. If the cookies you made turn out on the not so good side, don’t let that keep you from coming. Just head to the local grocery store and buy some to bring! 5. Please bring your recipe to share with those who might like it. We can make copies at the church. 6. Please bring a covered dish (with some type of food in it of course) to pass for lunch! 7. You must have a good time! With the hustle and bustle of the Christmas Season this is a time to relax and enjoy a good lunch and friendly fellowship with others. Hope to see you there!

UMYF Game Night

Dec, 10
Game night for the food basket
4:00 to 6:00
\$1.00 or 1 can good refreshments will be available for sale
pizza, hot dogs, doughnuts, Kool-Aid
all proceeds will go to the valley ministerium food basket .

Living Nativity

Peckville will be presenting a living nativity on Sunday, December 17 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. If you would like to help in any way please let Maureen Lucas or Beth Taylor know. We are in need of people of all ages to stand in the nativity; help in the kitchen to provide refreshments, also needed are the refreshments themselves. Thank You in advance for all your help.

Food Basket Delivery

Food baskets will be delivered on Wednesday evening December 22nd . If you would like to experience the true meaning of Christmas giving, come and help. We met at the church between 6:00 and 6:30.

Christmas Caroling

This year we will be Christmas Caroling on Saturday Night December 16th .We will meet at the Peckville church around 6:00p.m. and leave from there. Refreshments will follow. All are welcome!

The very purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was that He might offer up His life as a sacrifice for the sins of man. He came to die. This is the heart of Christmas.
Billy Graham

Christmas Eve Services

Christmas Eve services this year will be at Bradley Memorial church at 9:00p.m. and Peckville at 7:00p.m.

Peckville Christmas Cantata

The Peckville United Methodist Choir will present their cantata on Sunday December 17th at the 11:00am service.

Practical Strategies for a Peaceful Christmas

What is your heart's desire for Advent?

Whatever it is, does it depend on you doing each and every thing on your to-do list? This year, evaluate your list realistically. Highlight the things you truly love doing. Circle the ones that exhaust you the most. If some of your highlighted items are also circled, then they're probably worth your effort. But are all of the items you circled really necessary? What would happen if you simply didn't do them? Would Christmas grind to a halt this year?

.....
Welsh Cookies

Welsh cookie orders should be in by Sunday, December 31st for cookies made on Monday January 8
Orders should also be in on February 4 for cookies made on February 12.

Sky Lake Winter Retreat

Jan 26 - 28, 07

ages 3 - 11 \$42.00

ages 12 and up \$84.00

being a part of God's wonderful creation
seeing His outdoor sanctuary
singing together in worship
and listening to the sounds around you

enjoy a warm fire place in a beautiful lodge
playing games, singing and dancing with the young and the young at heart
cooking hot dogs and smores on an open fire
being served and taking turns serving meals
3 delicious, well balanced meals (and not having to fix them)
ice skating, sleigh riding, walks around the lake or just sitting in the warm lodge and watching this all happen.

Come and be a part of this GREAT time

This is open to ALL ages

Every year we get at least one or two new people. Maybe this year it will be YOU!

You will never regret it.

Don't let cost be the problem.

There is some funds to help,

We are also accepting funds for this cause.

If you need help or want to give help,

This is all anonymous, contact Ron Lucas, Karen Lucas or Pastor Sharon .

Hope to see you there.

Love in Christ

Ron

Mission statement of the Peckville/ Bradley Memorial Charge

**To glorify God by sharing
The gospel of Jesus Christ,
Nurturing disciples,
And reaching out to a world in need.**

Calendar of Events

11/22 – Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service at 7:00p.m. At Peckville United Methodist Church.

11/23– Thanksgiving Morning Service at Bradley Memorial at 9:00a.m.

11/26 – Food basket collection begins

11/30 – Church conference at Peckville – PPRC at 6:15 – conference at 7:00.

12/9 – Cookie exchange – 2:00pm

12/ 10– UMYF game night from 4:00p.m. to 6:00p.m.

12/16 – Christmas Caroling at 6:00pm

12/17 – Christmas cantata at Peckville 11:00am worship service

12/17 – Living nativity 6:00pm – 8:00pm

12/22 – Delivery of Christmas food baskets

12/24 – Christmas Eve Services; Bradley Memorial at 9:00p.m. Peckville at 7:00p.m.

1/26-1/28 – Sky Lake Weekend

Everyone from both Peckville and Bradley Memorial are welcome and encouraged to attend any or all events that interest them.

*“Freely you have received, freely give.”
Matthew 10:8*

The charge Secretary (Beth Taylor) can be reached at 383-2119, edt1157@yahoo.com or Peckville_Bradley_charge@yahoo.com.

A Childs Perception

“You know what the Baby Jesus is?” my six year old asked me this Christmas.

“What?” I asked absently, struggling to get our Christmas tree lights evenly distributed.

“The Baby Jesus,” she announced, “is what God’s love looked like when He turned it into a person.”

I don’t know if theologians would agree with all the ramifications of her statement. But I do know that my children often seem to have instinctive insight into spiritual things that wakes up my grown-up understanding.

At Christmastime, children play an essential part in our celebrations. So much of what we do is intended to please them – and all the while our hearts keep hearkening back to the Christmas memories of our own childhoods. On Christmas Eve, sometimes we can’t help but envy our children the stars in their eyes, especially when our own eyes are dull with exhaustion.

Christmas is so much simpler for a child. Can we open our tired adult hearts to that same simplicity?

CONFERENCE WEB SITE

Tom Taylor is in the process of updating information on the conference web site. This site has info on all the churches in the conference and churches are welcome to list a slate of officers if the wish. Tom will not do this without your permission. If you would like to be listed please contact Tom.