

"A Symphony of Praise  
and Service to God"



**105 E. Main  
Street**

**Ionia, MI  
48846**

**Service**

**9:30 am**

**www.ioniafirst.  
com**

**December  
2017  
Newsletter**



## From the desk of Pastor Jonathan

### "I Have An Announcement: You Might Miss Christmas"

*Gabriel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 1:30-38)*

You who are beloved in Christ Jesus, I will tell you a mystery.

As soon as we awake from the extended nap that always follows Thanksgiving, and sometimes even before that, we begin to hear Christmas songs and carols piped over the airways, our televisions are swamped with dramatically cheerful holiday advertisements, the stores bedeck themselves with greenery and other festive regalia, and our minds swoon as our synapses run hot with the elixir of holiday "cheer." By and large, it seems nearly impossible not to participate in the commercialization of Christmas; and this is primarily because those things which are being commercialized are good: hearth and home; the bonds of kith and kin; the allocation of wealth, great or small, for the giving of gifts, *et cetera*. Almost involuntarily, we go along with the culture in which we live, responding to the nostalgia of age-old traditions and long-held memory with renewed charity and glee. As Oscar Wilde once quipped in his perennial satire of Western culture, "Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess." Unknowingly, we go from the stupor of Thanksgiving into the full thrall of Christmas.

Here's the problem. Our imaginations become entirely occupied, and we have no energy left to place ourselves in the history of God's creation before the Hope of the World became incarnate in a little Jewish boy near a backwater town in ancient Israel. So, if you will allow me, I'd like to help you reboot your imagination before we've let another Advent go by unnoticed.

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Stop what you are doing. Put down the to-do list... turn off the tele and the stereo... put your phone on silent... set aside your recipe, the wrapping, the tree, the ornaments, the Christmas letter, the greeting card... turn the oven off... quiet your heart and enter the silence and expectation of Advent... because if you do not, you're going to miss your chance to actually get ready for Christmas.

**When you're ready...** imagine the world without the Christ Child. Spend some time with Mary in her doubt and astonishment. The Son of God is not a human person yet, but a figment of your imagination and the ludicrous promise of a stranger, who says his announcement comes from Almighty God. Enter Mary's world: a world in which you trust God even though there is no hope... a world economically and emotionally crushed by armies and tyrants... a world where survival is in question every day of every year... a world where grace and justice are increasingly in short supply... a world of misery and darkness... It will be uncomfortable and counterintuitive, but spend a little time every day of December going with Mary into the place where uncertainty gives way to trust. Don't be afraid of wandering *in the bleak midwinter* until your imagination consents to remember the creation without Jesus, the creation before *love came down at Christmas*.

In the ancient Tradition of the Church, Advent was a time for diligence, lament, and self-reflection. It should remain this for we who bear witness to Christ today. We are called, like the prophet, to do what everyone else believes to be crazy and prepare a way in the wilderness of our culture's noise and lights and forgetful glamor. On the map of our lives, we must trace the barren and burned-over places where we are still not whole. We must admit our suffering and sin. Therefore, forgo the temptation to smother your suffering with sentimental aphorisms and festive platitudes; forgo the temptation to fill the hunger left by sin with cakes and pies and candy canes. Otherwise, you will miss Christmas; you will not recognize Jesus when he comes.

*For our sake, God made him to be sin who knew no sin,  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Clear the throne of your heart of all the debris of modern life. Forget what you think you know and consent to the promises of a gracious God. Say with a frightened young girl, "let it be with me according to your word." Wait in the darkness and silence. The Spirit of Life will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and somewhere, sometime – in the quiet of your secret heart – the touch will take: the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God will move you from doubt to trust... from despair to hope... from fear to love.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### **UMW BOARD**

The UMW Board has openings for several new members. Meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30p.m. No particular talents are essential. Input of new ideas and incentives are needed for traditional and new events.

### **CASSIE STEWART CIRCLE**

To volunteer to participate in Hands on Mission Projects, plan to join the Cassie Stewart Circle which meets at 1:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. Attendance at each meeting is not a requirement. Just come and assist whenever convenient. We promise a great fellowship, a time to share and get acquainted in addition to participating in a mission project. Activities vary each month.

### **BRUNCH POTLUCKS**

Brunch Potlucks are at 10:30 a.m. on the third Sunday of each month unless otherwise posted.

### **NURSERY**

We are in need of ladies to help in the nursery on Sunday mornings at 9:30. The more volunteers we have, the less often you will be asked to help. Contact Marie in the church office (527-1860)

### **THE IONIA COUNTY LITERACY COUNCIL**

is looking for volunteer tutors to help adults improve their reading, math or English speaking skills. Are you looking for a meaningful volunteer project? if this sounds like you, please visit our website: [www.ioniacountyliteracycouncil.org](http://www.ioniacountyliteracycouncil.org) and call us at 616-389-8529 or email: [ionalliteracy@gmail.com](mailto:ionalliteracy@gmail.com) We are also reaching out to those who need our services!

### **CHRISTMAS FLOWERS**

We will have 13 Poinsettias and 4 Christmas Cacti to decorate our Sanctuary for Christmas Eve. If you ordered flowers, please take them home after the service that night.

### **BAPTISM**

**Elliott Thomas Bratt Carle will be baptized on December 31st. We will have a joint service with Lyons-Muir at 10:30 a.m. here followed by a lunch.**

**Pastor Jonathan and Jessica will furnish ham. Side dishes and dessert will be potluck style.**

**Please make plans to join us for this joyous occasion.**

### **St. Joseph, MO Mission**

I have found a mission for prescription bottles in St. Joseph, MO. There is a large public clinic that is accepting used prescription bottles. Stripping the labels before washing the bottles makes the labels come off much easier without leaving the bottles sticky.

## Sunday School News

Our first studies this fall have taken us from Genesis 1 through The Flood.

We are blessed to have committed teachers, Amber Campbell and Eric Asher, who help our children grow in their faith and understanding of their Savior.

Just a note to say thank you to Ken and Ann Felice for so generously offering the use of their garage, trailer and generator. Without these gifts a float would not have come together. Thank you too, to Marilyn Nash, Noelle Podoll and Jan Powell for helping my "vision" come into reality. Our float "The Prince of Peace" represents the crowning and glory of our Father's love. Thank you to everyone who gave candy and joined us at the parade to represent our Christian Family at First UMC. We will pray that our Father blesses us each time we reach out to our community and guide His children's hearts to seek His truth and promise.

A Christmas presentation is being prepared for the children as well. It will not be a "traditional" play, but they will be taking the lead in the telling of Jesus' birth. Please be sure your children are here each Sunday to help them be confident as they tell us the Christmas Story. Presentation will be Sunday, December 17th during our church service.

Please pray for our children and our program, that our Father help the children receive His Word, take it into their hearts and out into their world when they leave church.

As we are reminded, these children ARE OUR FUTURE. It is our responsibility, each of us, to ensure they understand and know their place in our church and world. This will be THEIR church one day. They will be the leaders and doers. Help them understand their importance to the life of the church.

If you ever have ideas or concerns, please contact Pastor Jonathan or Jana Fedon.



Watch for exciting things to happen over the next few months. The Music on the Green Committee has had its first meeting to start planning for summer of 2018. We are very excited about the possibilities.

# Photograph

By Mark S. Workman

A blue sky morning

Crisp and cool

Perfect for kayaking

Fall colors abound

Reds that would make the jolly old elf jealous and yellows that were the purest gold

There were oranges and browns of every shade

There were the greens of rushes, cattails and of all the different pines and other conifers

There was the white of the paper birch's bark; their leaves turning from green to yellow to tan, were already starting to fall

The cabin, painted a deep dark red with white trim, was closed up

The windows shuttered for the season

Fall was upon us, the Show Birds were already migrating south

Along with the geese, swans, herons and ducks

The Red Wing Blackbirds were gone

Flying south in flocks thousands strong

The lake was eerily quiet

**PLEASE PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD  
FOR:**

(E-mail prayer requests to [sharron67@charter.net](mailto:sharron67@charter.net))

**Prayers for those in the military:**

Adam Cook-Green Beret, Afghanistan

Nick Murray-Aircraft Carrier, Bremerton WA

Andy Hoort-Nurse, Ret. Royal Oak, MI

Ross Marshall, Navy, Submarine, Groton, CT

Daniel Zander-Major U.S. Army Ft. Lewis-McChord

Duane Baliff

Austin Campbell - Air Force

**Prayers for:**

**Carol Newkirk**

**Stuart Weisgerber**

**Bryant Adams**

**Hunter Wagner**

**Arlene Roland**

**Mark Workman**

**Elisha & Crystal Stock**

**Barb Helmer**

**Penny Wineman**

**Scott Burkman**

**Mike Nelson**

**Jerry Lawrence**

**Kristie Newkirk**

**Nancy & David Carle**

**Mary Vernon**

**Elizabeth Smith-**

**Steve Lampman-**

**Julie Englehart**

**Lily Goodwin**

**Gary Hanson**

**Robert Zander**

**Katherine Asher**

**David May**

**Nicole Rhodes**

**Amanda Bishop**

**David May**

**Amanda Bishop**



## UMW/CASSIE STEWART CIRCLE UPDATE

As I pondered how to begin my message to you this month, these words just came out of nowhere and appeared on my laptop screen.

"You have a destiny filled with purpose, passion and joy. No matter what may be surrounding you today, the truth is, you can live victoriously and become the person you were meant to be. God doesn't want you living in the past. There is a powerful purpose in your life. As a child of God, you have a divine purpose that He wants you to live out with passion and joy!"

**My thoughts are that this could be a message for all of us, and so I share it with you.**

First, before all else, I want to thank all of you, for the support and concern that has been shown. Don really enjoyed your calls, your cards and letters, your gifts and your visits. He loved to be with people and it meant a great deal to him. I, too, thank you for all your prayers, your support, and friendship.

During the last few weeks your UMW women have been very, very busy. Again, I thank you for your generosity. Members of the Cassie Stewart Circle prepared for shipping 24 Samaritan's Purse Shoeboxes and Avis White took them to the reception center. That was just wonderful! There will be 24 delighted little children when they are delivered.

The turn-out of 16 vendors for the Harvest Bazaar was quite overwhelming. We had to say "No more room." Many shoppers remarked about their successful shopping experience. However, we sincerely wish that someone had not ordered the rain.

Now we are well underway finalizing the Christmas Basket Mission. We are serving 8 families from the Head Start Eight Cap Program and five additional families. The Gift Request Tree is up and the need and wishes displayed. The initial contact has been made and we are prepared to brighten the Christmas of 51 people. So, just watch for all the opportunities for you to assist us: the shopping, the wrapping, the donations, the deliveries. As you brighten the days of others, you will be blessed.

Attendance	Giving
Nov. 5	\$2,603.00
Nov. 12	\$2,208.75
Nov. 19	\$1,363.75
Nov. 26	\$2,568.00

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Discerning the Voice of God is a Women's Bible Study opportunity beginning on Thursday, January 18th from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. There will be seven sessions concluding Thursday, March 1st.

Please contact Marilyn Nash for further information. She will need to know those who want to participate by January 3rd to arrange for enough study materials. You can reach Marilyn at 616-527-7456 or e-mail [Marilynn1@charter.net](mailto:Marilynn1@charter.net)

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#### TRUSTEE COMMITTEE

The Trustees called a special meeting after church on Sunday, November 26th to discuss the purchase of two defibrillators; one for the sanctuary area and another for the kitchen/fellowship hall. A vote was taken and unanimously passed by the members present. The defibrillators will be ordered this week. When they arrive, they will be professionally installed, and a select group of people (ushers, soup kitchen workers, etc.) will be trained in their use.

We also discussed the possible purchase of a new air compressor for the boiler (the one we have has a date on it of 1952). No vote was taken at this meeting.

Minutes submitted by Mark Workman

## BIRTHDAYS

### December

- 1 Carrie Stout
- 5 Jessica Bratt Carle
- 9 Doris Simpson
- 11 Janessa Shattuck
- 12 Paul Frost
- 12 Jane Ransom
- 16 Matthew Felice
- 20 Greg Hotchkin
- 23 Jackie Christiansen
- 29 Chris Podoll
- 31 Eric Fulcher



### December Anniversaries

*27 Ken & Ann Felice*

### December

#### Greeters

- Dec. 3 Joyce Slomski
- Dec. 10 Sharron Chapman
- Dec. 17 Al & Marge Irby
- Dec. 24 Ruth French
- Dec. 31 Peg Fell

Note: If you have agreed to serve as a greeter on a Sunday morning, but find that you cannot do so, please call Peg (527-2433) or the church office (527-1860).

### December

#### Nursery

- Dec. 3
- Dec. 10
- Dec. 17
- Dec. 24
- Dec. 31

We can always use more people to help in the nursery. If you would like to volunteer, please call Marie Church (616-755-3207) or the church office (527-1860).

# December 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Mission: Appalachia Service Project					1 6:30p.m. Christ- mas Parade	2 1-3p.m. Hnging of the Greens
3 Communion	4 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	5 9:30 am Friend- ship Comm. 1:30 pm UMW	6 8:30 a.m. Morn- ing Prayer	7	8	9
10 <b>Noisy Offering</b> 3-5 p.m. Christ- mas Concert at the theater 6:00p.m. Advent Church Walk	11 1:30 pm Cassie Stewart 6:00pm Soup Kit	12	13 8:30 a.m. Morn- ing Prayer 6:00p.m. Blue Christmas at Lyons-Muir	14	15	16
17 10:30a.m. Potluck Brunch 5:00 p.m. Christ- mas Comes to Michigan play	18 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Ad Board	19 10 a.m., 2 p.m. & 6:30 p.m. Wrap Party for Christmas Bas- kets	20 8:30 a.m. Morn- ing Prayer	21	22 Newsletter Dead- line	23 Shopping and Delivery of Christmas Baskets
24 8:00 p.m. Christ- mas Eve Service	25 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	26	27 8:30 a.m. Morn- ing Prayer	28	29	30
31 10:30 a.m. Joint Service here— Bap- tism of Elliott Bratt Carle & lunch						



**105 E. Main Street  
Ionia, MI 48846**

**Service 9:30am**

**Check it out!**

**[www.ioniafirst.com](http://www.ioniafirst.com)**



A close-up photograph of a dark brown pine cone with long, thin green pine needles visible in the background. Overlaid on the image is a large, elegant cursive text message.

*May God's Peace and Joy  
Be Yours this  
Christmas*







