

HOPEWELL

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

'A Place to Find Hope and Be Well'

20220 Hopewell Road

Mount Vernon, OH 43050

*Our mission is to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ
and minister to the needs of others in His name.*

January – February, 2016

Pastor's Ponderings – *Pastor Lee Cubie*

Seasons of Providence

The last Sunday of November begins a new year for the Christian Church which has its own calendar. The Christian calendar is broken into different seasons. The first season is Advent. It is followed by the Season of Christmas. Following the Christmas Season is the Season of Epiphany followed by Lent. After Lent comes the Easter Season followed by the Season of After Pentecost. These seasons are intended to remind us of God's providence, a word that means God's protective care, year round. We live in a nation that has its own calendar. On its calendar are events that meet its national concerns such as the 4th of July, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Mother's Day, and Thanksgiving Day, all holidays rooted in our nations struggle to gain and retain the freedoms we enjoy. In a way both calendars celebrate the providence of God: one celebrates God's providence for our nation, and the Church calendar celebrates God's providence for all the people of the world and for his creation.

Since we find ourselves moving into the Season of Christmas and out of the Season of Advent, it is important to remember why the Church calendar begins with Advent. As the United Methodist Book of Worship describes it,

Advent "is a season of four weeks including four Sundays. *Advent* derives from the Latin *adventus*, which means 'coming.' The season proclaims the comings of the Christ—whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate. Each year Advent calls the community of faith to prepare for these comings; historically, the season was marked by fasts for preparation. Each Sunday of Advent has its distinctive theme: Christ's coming in final victory, John the Baptist [for two Sundays], and the events immediately preceding the birth of Jesus Christ."

To make it clearer, Advent is a time when we get ready for the two comings of Jesus Christ. The first one is the birth of the Christ Child, Jesus. The second coming is when Jesus comes in all his glory--what we call 'The Second Coming of Christ.'

The Second Coming of Christ, a day that is described in scripture as the 'Great and Terrible Day of the LORD.' This phrase, 'The Great and Terrible Day of the LORD,' comes out of the book of Joel, one of the prophets of God, called a minor prophet, not because what he had to say wasn't as important as the major prophets, but because he did not write as big a book. The passage reads,

"And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the *great and terrible day of the LORD* comes." [Joel 3:30-31]



The Apostle Peter quotes Joel in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. There Peter, instead of using the word terrible, uses a Greek word meaning glorious referring to the judgment of God. [Acts 2:20] In both Joel and Acts the reference is to the Day of Judgment, when God will judge the nations. This judgment is described in the Apocalypse of John, or the Revelation of John.

Advent includes, then, these two great events dealing with the judgment of God upon all the nations of the earth. We often forget, that the coming of Jesus as a child in the manger is part of God's plan to judge the nations. As Simeon told Mary and Joseph upon seeing the baby Jesus, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." [Luke 2:34b-35]

Advent, in the life of the church, is a season of preparation for the coming God's judgment. What needs to be remembered in the idea of judgment is the hope of redemption. It is because of this redemption that the church celebrates the birth of the Christ Child with gifts and symbols of joy.

Advent is truly a season of hope. Advent grounds our lives and our nation to a reality beyond ourselves. Advent reminds us of where our blessings come from and what they are to be used for. It is good to remember how blessed we are in this great nation of ours. Our nation has truly been a miraculous birth. We have been blessed with great resources: fertile land, mineral wealth, great institutions of learning, an economic system that truly knows no equal, and perhaps most importantly, a system of government that affords its citizens unparalleled freedoms. These resources have been salted with a people dedicated to a God who is loving and just. It is this blessing, a just and loving God, that brings hope. It is this blessing of a loving and just God that gives meaning and purpose to all the other blessings that God has given us.

The Season of Advent, like no other season, reminds us of the might of God and our place before him. Isaiah, in proclaiming hope to the people of Israel, reminds them of who their God is, something that would be good for us to remember. He writes in chapter 40,

A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the LORD God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as his counselor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? The idol! A workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains. He who is impoverished chooses for an offering wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an image that will not move.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the

beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? Says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their hosts by number, calling them by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hid from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he gives strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. [Isaiah 40:6-31]

This chapter, like no other, speaks of God's majesty and our position to him. God sent his Son on Christmas morning to remind us of his terrible majesty. Wonder and hope begin when we realize that this God would so stoop to bring us into a loving relationship with him. Without Advent there could not be a Christmas morning. There could not be an Easter morning. We have begun a new year in the church; let us be humble before our God. Amen.

UMW Report - *Marsha Clayborne, Secretary*

Every November the UMW has a church outing for the congregation and their families. The Mullets on Deal Road has been the place the last few years to enjoy an Amish-style dinner. Door prizes were given by Barb Butler for the event on Nov. 10.

The UMW met at the home of Joan Coon and Eleanor Doup for the December meeting. After the luncheon the meeting began. Devotions were read by Joan Coon and the program was led by Joan Coon and Eleanor Doup.

The Christmas program for Trim-a-Tree night on December 6 was hosted by the UMW. Christmas music, a children's program, a silent auction, and food to enjoy highlighted the event. The silent auction netted \$269. We learned about Christmas as the Hopewell congregation would have celebrated it 100 years ago. A special thank you to Barb Butler for putting the program together and to Bob Joseph for volunteering his time to be auctioneer. Thanks to Irma Newland, Bob Joseph, and Don Newland for the beautiful Christmas hymns. The UMW gave the children bags of candy and had them decorate the tree with popcorn and cranberries that were made for them to put on the tree.

There will be no January and February meetings since the weather is cold and snowy. The UMW ladies invite all who would like to join us in fellowship at our next March meeting. Thanks to everyone this year who has donated in our school supplies and winter clothing drive. The congregation at Hopewell is a very generous church.

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with
their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

-- Howard Thurman

from Worthington UMC newsletter (*The Messenger*)

Dear Lord, So far today I've done
alright. I haven't gossiped, been
greedy grumpy, nasty or selfish.
But in a few minutes I'm going
to get out of bed and I'm
going to need a lot
more help... Amen



ROTTENCARDS

Birthdays

January

4 D.J. Johnson
5 Maryellen Aranda
8 Jean Campbell

February

1 Don Newland
1 Julie Zimmerman
4 Anne Russell
9 Shad Bevington
11 Brad Coon
11 Amy Yashnyk
13 Howard Workman
18 Leah Gourley
20 Donna Lybarger
23 Alivia Zimmerman
28 Michael Padula

Next Vision Team meeting:

Wednesday, **February 3**, 7-8:30 PM.
We will meet for dessert and
discussion at Bob Evans restaurant on
Coshocton Road. All members and
friends of HUMC are invited.

Financial Report (as of December 22, 2015)

- Barb Butler, Treasurer

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| General Fund | \$39,224 |
| Building Capital Maintenance Fund | \$14,828 |
| Centennial Capital Campaign Fund: | |
| Paid pledges | \$20,970 |

Next Church Council meeting:

Sunday, **March 6**, 8:30 - 9:30 AM.

Kroger Community Rewards Program

- Barb Butler, Treasurer

Since entering the Kroger Community Rewards
Program just over two years ago, Hopewell UM
Church has received a total of \$1,026.

If you shop at Kroger's and wish to participate,
contact Linda Joseph or Barb Butler. The money
you spend on groceries helps HUMC earn cash.
Your help is appreciated.

Follow Hopewell UMC...

...on the Web:

www.mvhopewellumc.org

...on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/HopewellUMCMt
Vernon](http://www.facebook.com/HopewellUMCMtVernon)

Follow Three Rivers District...

<http://3riversumc.org>

Barb Butler writes, "This poem was written by Marsha Clayborne and put in our Christmas card some time ago. With Marsha's permission, I would like to share it with all of our readers."

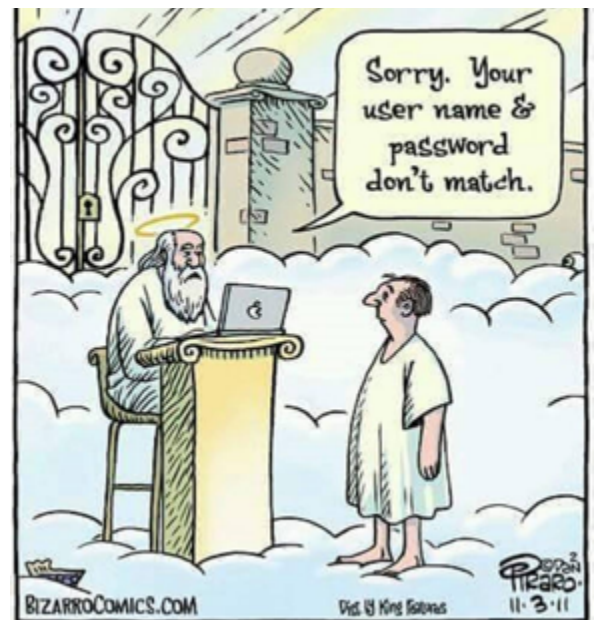
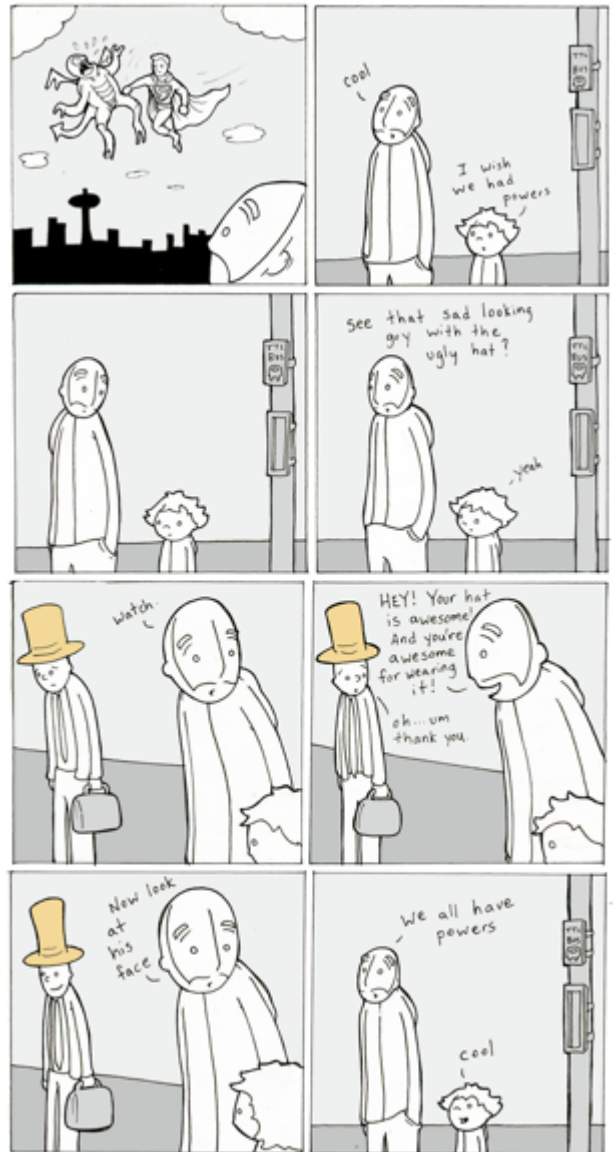
My Old Country Church

--by Marsha Clayborne

Down Hopewell Road sits an Old Country Church
in a field by itself, trimmed in white.
Friends gather each Sunday to Worship and Pray
knowing God is our strength and our Light.

The colored glass windows, a sign of the past,
remember the names left behind,
A church that stood still many years ago
has a heart and a soul hard to find.

This Old Country Church I now call my home
is waiting for you and for me.
Our spirit will always be here evermore
to continue His Son's legacy.



Vision Team Update –Bob Joseph, Team leader

The Vision Team met for dessert and discussion at Bob Evans on Nov. 11. We looked back at the past two years of visioning, with a focus on the SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis, and some of the progress made.

Strengths: Most strengths remain evident, with “growing diversity” added to the list.

Weaknesses: Some weaknesses are being overcome, e.g., small/aging congregation, few involved, resistance to change.

Opportunities: (See below)

Threats: Potential threats include a cultural departure from religion/church, complacency—and Irma’s eventual retirement as organist.

Much time was devoted to recalling the original **opportunities** and headway that’s been made.

Following is a partial list:

- Improve communications: HUMC has published a yearly calendar (which must be updated for 2016) and a bi-monthly newsletter; the membership roll has been updated.
- Attract and retain children: Youth Yak; youth involved in lighting candles, receiving offering, singing; adults prepared activity bags; children’s page added to newsletter.
- Improve financial stability and security: Continued CES dinner, fundraisers and silent auctions; conducted centennial campaign
- Increase involvement/commitment of current members: Continued/expanded mission projects, e.g., Nursing outreach ministry and Rice bowl challenge; Active trustees and SPPR committee
- Improve worship experience for members and visitors: The music program has been enhanced by member and guest ‘artists’, e.g., the Wolfe family, Timothy Noble, and the Scioto Ridge Boys; Youth Yak (again)
- Increase church ‘visibility’: A new signboard and exterior lighting were added; worship times are advertised in KnoxWays and Cider Press. HUMC has a presence on Facebook and a Web site.

The next team meeting is planned for Feb. 3 from 7 – 8:30 PM at Bob Evans. The topic will be “How does Hopewell serve God in the community and the world.”





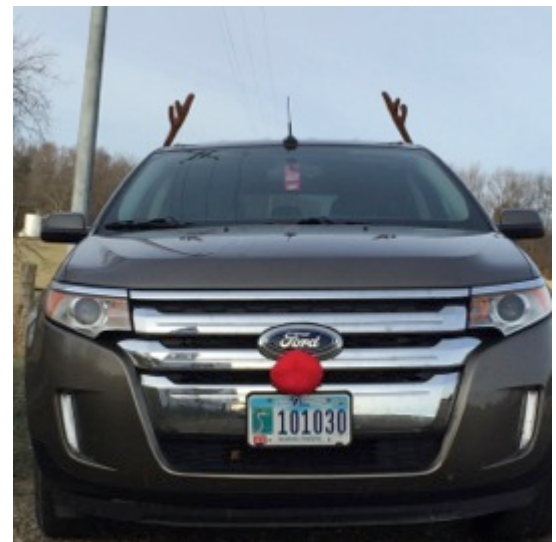
Hoar frost on the wrought iron gate, and every other non-moving thing, greeted the Hopewell congregation on Dec 6.



The Gourley family (from left, Bitsi, Natalie, Leah, Jesse and Mickey) lit the 2nd Advent candle on Dec 6.



During Youth Yak on Dec. 6, the Hopewell youth became branches of a Christmas tree.



Donna Spinks's car is in Rudolf mode, thanks to her great-nieces and -nephews.



Jean Riley, Bev Lahmon, and Ellen Kaiser were Advent readers and lit the 4th candle, with an assist from Pastor Lee on Dec. 20



Beautiful, red poinsettias, placed in memory of Hopewell loved ones, graced the altar on Dec. 20.