

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.*

December 2022 – January 2023

Pastor's Ponderings -- Pastor Lee Cubie

"In the Beginning" (This article is reprised from the Dec 2020-Jan 2021 newsletter, selected by the editors as a 'best of Pastor Lee Cubie' contribution. Thank you, Lee, for eight years (about 50 editions) of faith-based, thought-stimulating articles.



"When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ... then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men. Prov. 8:27,30

"In the beginning..." How many stories do you know that start out this way? Mysteries may start this way. Adventure stories may start this way. Romance stories may start this way. *In the beginning*, is a good way to start a story. It lets the reader know they haven't missed anything, there is nothing that comes before the story.

"In the beginning" is how the book of Genesis starts. It is a very sensible way for a story to begin. It says here are the facts and nothing but the facts.

"In the beginning" tells us there is going to be more to the story. It could be the beginning of the story of Bilbo Baggins. *In the beginning*, there lived a hobbit over the hill and down under, a very respectable hobbit. One day there came a loud knocking on the door...and you can begin to see what I mean.

"In the beginning God created." What a way

to begin the Bible. The very first thing we learn about God is he is creative and he creates. We learn both of these things simultaneously. Creativity always takes a form. What we learn is of utmost importance if it is *in the beginning*. That is because everything flows out from the beginning.

"In the beginning" whets our curiosity. What is it that God is going to create? Is he going to create dinosaurs? I hope so. I had one young friend tell me recently that she figured out why there were no more dinosaurs. She told me that God got rid of them because they were hurting people. It is good to know that *in the beginning* God was making sure we were safe. In fact, the story of the Bible is the story of God working to protect us. He is protecting us from our harmful selves.

Now what does this have to do with Advent, Christmas, or Epiphany? Advent is the season when we anticipate the coming of God into creation. We often think about it as the second coming of Jesus Christ. But it is also about *In the beginning*.

Do you recognize this beginning? *"In the beginning was the WORD, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made."* This sounds very much like, *"In the beginning God created."* The quote continues, *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* Going back to Genesis we read, *"And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God separated the light from the darkness."* That is the beginning of the revelation of God in Genesis and the beginning of the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel of John. Therefore, *In the beginning* was the advent of God both in the creation account and in the gospel stories.

"In the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." is how the gospel of Mark begins. He then launches into the story of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' preaching ministry. Luke begins by introducing us to the parents of John the Baptist. Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy from Abraham. In both accounts they are trying to begin the story of Jesus with the events around his birth. Christmas is a story of *"In the beginning."*

Epiphany is also a story of beginnings. It is the story of the first revelation to the gentiles, you and me, represented in the persons of the three wise men.

Within the book of Revelation, which is often associated with Advent, we find this sentence, *"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."* Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, omega is the last letter. It is like saying 'I am the a and the z. What is Jesus talking about here in the book of Revelation? The alpha refers to *"In the beginning"* of Genesis. The omega refers to the end of a fallen world. There is a sentence before this sentence that says, *"And he who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'" This makes the omega a beginning, the beginning of all things new.*

During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, it is tempting to think of the end of the world, the birth of a child, and three wise men. When we do this, we lose the mystery of God's creative power. In Genesis it was the creation of the world and all that is in it. In Revelation it is the story of all things being made new. What we miss is how God has made his creative power personal. In each and every Christian there is a beginning. In each and every Christian there is a *"Behold, I make all things new."* Within each and every Christian there is a revealing of who Jesus Christ is. These three seasons celebrate our redemption in Jesus Christ, and we are much richer if we remember that.

What is your beginning? How is God making you new?

Art: The Ancient of Days, by William Blake, 1794

Beginning about 1964, Bob Joseph's Aunt Mary Cryder (1926-2009) created an original Christmas poem each year, including this from 1997. That year she humbly commented, "No threat to Hallmark. Ha! But I keep trying."

Our gift exchange:
Clothes, books, tapes, toys
With friends, food, fun
Spell Christmas joys.

God's gifts: Forgiveness
(Found in no store),
Direction, peace with self—
What more!

Trim a Tree -- Marsha Clayborne

Trim-a-Tree, potluck, and silent auction will be held on December 4 at 6 pm. Bring an appetizer, and your singing voice for carols and hymns.

Auction items can be something old or new, handmade items or your best homemade recipe, fun Christmas toys, new tools, signed memorabilia, artwork,, school spirit gear, muscle for hire, etc.

Wreaths Across America...including Hopewell – Donna Spinks



We have 25 Veterans to honor and nine service organizations, e.g., military service branches and first responders, with a wreath. Each wreath is \$10.00, and November 27 is the last day to make a contribution for this year. (Make checks to "HUMC" and mark "Wreaths" on the memo line.) On December 18, the wreaths will be installed following a brief service. Last year was our first year, and it was such a big success--Let's make this an annual tradition to honor our veterans.



Women's Bible Study -- Phyllis Gourley

The women have finished two Bible studies: The Book of Esther and the Letter of Paul to the Philippians. We will be starting another study in January. We are averaging about 10 women and welcome more women to join us.

Red Kettles Have Methodist Links. – Joe Iovino, UMC Communications, Dec 14, 2017

When Christmas shopping, many encounter the red kettles and ringing bells of the Salvation Army. Not all will know that the Salvation Army has Methodist roots.

William Booth, a Methodist minister, started The Salvation Army in London in 1865. His passion for reaching the poor, homeless, and hungry with the gospel of Jesus Christ led him to open a mission to meet people's physical needs. That mission continues to grow today.



Goodwill Industries is a similar organization with United Methodist ties. Methodist minister the Rev. Edgar J. Helms founded the organization in Boston in 1902. He hired and trained people in need of a job, to repair and resell donations he collected.



Church Council Meeting Notes – October 30, 2022

Council Chair Bill Lawhon called the meeting to order, and Pastor Lee Cubie opened the meeting with prayer.

Committee Reports:

Council: Bill Lawhon applauded the 2015-2016 capital campaign and listed some of the improvements that were made with the (approx. \$36K) funds raised. Most recently the church was completely re-sided with durable material. While not asking for immediate action or funding, Bill noted there are still needs, e.g., space for a nursery and fellowship/potlucks.

Finance: Co-treasurer Donna Spinks presented a report of Hopewell funds and an annual budget for 2023. In summary, the general funds balance is \$101,486 (about \$2K ahead of the 2/2022 report), and the Building Maintenance/Improvement funds balance is \$18,474 (about \$36K below the 2/2022 report, primarily due to church siding replacement expenses). On behalf of co-treasurer Phyllis Gourley, Donna also presented a 2023 budget of \$39,280, which included \$4,750* for conference/district apportionments, \$18,120 for ministerial support, and \$16,160 for other local church expenses (utilities, insurance, building improvement, worship/program expenses, etc.).

*The actual conference/district apportionments amount is not yet available; the budget figure is based on the 2022 amount and not expected to be materially different. Bob Joseph moved (Mick Gourley seconded) to adopt the budget; motion passed.

Pastor-Parish Relations: Regarding appointment of a pastor for 2023, Lee reported that he has met with the district superintendent, a Hopewell committee has met with the DS, and the DS has promised he would be seeking a good person for the church, which has always been good and faithful in paying 100% of apportionments to the conference. Lee encouraged the council to pray for the new pastor and to be welcoming and supportive of him/her.

Trustees: Bill Lawhon praised ‘the good group of trustee volunteers’ at Hopewell.

Pastor’s Report: Pastor Lee Cubie noted that COVID affected Hopewell UMC—we lost a few parishioners. He is pleased with the new—and ‘same’—people who are attending. Hopewell is a loving, healthy church congregation with a lot for which to be thankful. He loves this church.

New Business:

Communion: A few people have been considering how to return to bread-and-juice communion elements, rather than the pre-made commercial cups. For sanitation, perhaps the bread cubes could be served on toothpicks and the juice in individual cups in traditional trays.

Women’s Bible Study: Bitsi expressed thanks to the church for purchasing materials for the group.



"I Heard the Bells" – the Story Behind the Song – *source unavala*

Here's the backstory to a true American Christmas carol.

The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote "Christmas Bells" (the carol we call "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day") in 1863 in a depression over the death of his wife, who died from burns after her nightgown caught fire; and the severe wounding of his son (who enlisted without Longfellow's blessing) during the Civil War.

The poem reflects both his sadness over the war and the state of the world, his own personal pain, and his continuing hope in the power of God.

He wrote the poem on Christmas Day in 1863, after Gettysburg, but before it was clear that the war was turning, and there still remained no end in sight.

When we sing the song today, we almost always leave out some of the key verses explaining Longfellow's motivation for writing it, and so here it is with the missing stanzas restored:

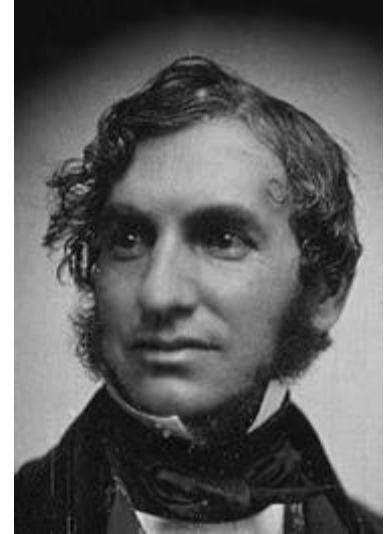
~*~

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!



It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

Hopewell Birthdays

December

- 3 Jessie Gourley
- 7 Joan Coon
- 7 Donna Spinks
- 7 Joe Beran
- 9 Bev Pottmeyer
- 16 Theo Wells
- 17 Jack Laymon
- 19 Jeff Scott
- 25 Lord Jesus

Hopewell Birthdays

January

- 1 Dave Gore
- 4 DJ Johnson
- 8 Anneliese Scott
- 18 Joe Laymon
- 27 Stephanie Scott

December 2022					Jan 2023 ▶		
◀ Nov 2022	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
~Car Donation Month ~Nat'l Pear Month ~Nat'l Tie Month ~Spiritual Literacy Month					1 ~Anarctica Day ~Basketball Day	2 ~Faux Fur Day ~Safety Razor Day	3 ~B1G Championship ~Be a Blessing Day B'day- Jessie Courley
4 2 nd Sunday of Advent ~Nat'l Cookie Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship/Communion	5 ~Bathub Party Day	6 ~Mitten Tree Day	7 ~Pearl Harbor Day ~Cotton Candy Day B'day- Joan Coon B'day- Donna Spinks B'day- Joe Beran	8 ~TP Appreciation Day	9 ~Official Lost & Found Day B'day- Bev Pottmeyer	10 ~Gingerbread House Day	
11 3 rd Sunday of Advent ~Nat'l Sobriety Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship/refreshments	12 ~Poinsettia Day	13 ~Day of the Horse	14 ~Yoga Day	15 ~Bill of Rights Day ~Cat Herders Day	16 ~Ugly Christmas Sweater Day B'day- Theo Wells	17 ~Wreaths Across America Day B'day- Jack Laymon	
18 4 th Sunday of Advent ~Arabic Language Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship	19 ~No Holidays Day B'day- Jeff Scott	20 ~Games Day	21 Winter Solstice ~Shorts Day	22 ~Forefathers Day	23 ~Festivus	24 Christmas Eve ~Egg Nog Day	
25 Christmas Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship B'day- Lord Jesus	26 ~Boxing Day ~Thank You Note Day	27 ~Visit the Zoo Day	28 ~Pledge of Allegiance Day	29 ~Tick Tock Day	30 ~No Interruptions Day	31 New Year's Eve ~Make Up Your Mind Day	

January 2023

◀ Dec 2022

Feb 2023 ▶

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 New Year's Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship/Communion B'day— Dave Gore	2 New Year's Day Observed -National Science Fiction Day	3 -Int'l Mind-Body Wellness Day	4 -National Spaghetti Day B'day— DJ Johnson	5 -National Bird Day	6 -Epiphany -National Cuddle Up Day	7 -Orthodox Christmas -National Bobblehead Day
8 -World Typing Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship/refreshments B'day— Anneliese Scott	9 -Blue Monday -Law Enforcement Appreciation Day	10 -Nat'l Houseplant Appreciation Day	11 -Nat'l Milk Day	12 -Nat'l Pharmacist Day	13 -Nat'l Gluten-free Day	14 -World Logic Day
15 -Nat'l Hat Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship	16 Martin Luther King Jr. -Human Rights Day	17 -Prohibition Begins	18 -Museum Selfie Day B'day— Joe Laymon	19 -Nat'l Popcorn Day	20 -Nat'l Cheese Lovers Day	21 -Nat'l Hugging Day -World Religion Day
22 -Chinese New Year 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship	23 -Nat'l Pie Day	24 -Int'l Day of Education	25 -Opposite Day	26 -Nat'l Spouses Day	27 -Nat'l Fun at Work Day B'day— Stephanie Scott	28 -Nat'l Lego Day
29 -Nat'l Puzzle Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship	30 -Nat'l Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day	31 -Nat'l Backward Day	-National Bath Safety Month -National Blood Donor Month -National Hot Tea, Oatmeal, Soup Month -National Hobby Month			

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