

HOPEWELL

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

'A Place to Find Hope and Be Well'

20220 Hopewell Road

Mount Vernon, OH 43050

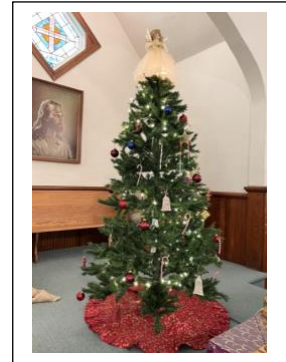
*Our mission is to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ
and minister to the needs of others in His name.*

December 2023 - January 2024

Pastor's Ponderings -- Pastor Lee Cubie - a favorite 'pondering' reprised from Dec. 2016.

Christmas

Christmas! What a wonderful time of year! Many of us have very fond memories of Christmas. We celebrate Christmas in many different and wonderful ways. It is especially delightful when the snow is freshly fallen, sparkling like diamonds cast upon the earth in the sunlight. Colored lights, that hypnotize, as they twinkle in the starlight. Trees, decorated with ornaments, pop up overnight, bringing wonderment to young and old alike. Stores are richly decorated in myriad textures, patterns and colors.

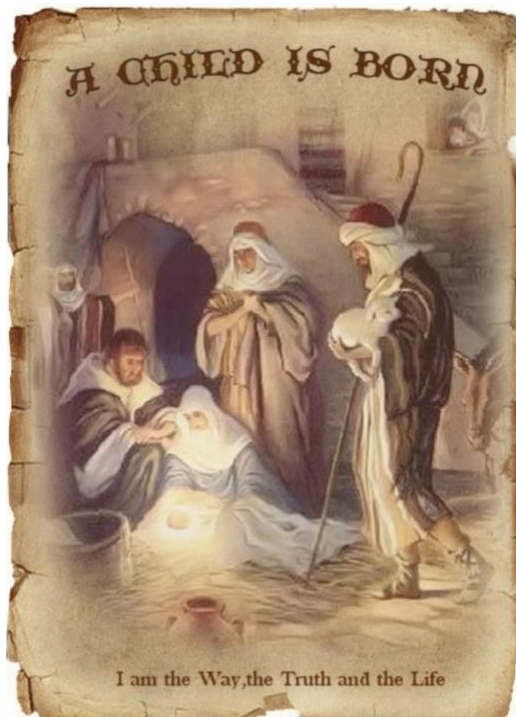


Christmas is drenched with sights, sounds, and smells that bring joy into our lives. Bells ringing, carolers caroling, sounds of beauty, sounds of life. And in the home, kitchens full of spices smelling comforting yet faintly mysterious. Richness of butter and cream, delightfully expressed, with the help of vanilla, sugar and flour, into cookies, shaped into stars, canes, Santas and elves. All of them frosted and some sprinkled with candied bits carrying the colors of the rainbow.

What a delight to the senses!

Have you ever wondered why Christmas follows Advent? It seems odd to have such a joyful time preceded by scriptures that warn us of the judgment of God. Well it seems odd, if Christmas is just a holiday to make us feel happy. Christmas, however, was meant by God to bring more than delight to our senses. It was meant to bring delight to our souls. The sending of Jesus as a babe, so long ago, was God announcing that he was beginning the close of this age, and the beginning of the age to come. Christmas, for the people of Christ, is the announcement of our hope, that this world will finally be put to right.

Continued on next page.



God's healing of this world begins with the birth of a little boy, tucked away with parents, in a stall with the animals God created. All of creation was in that stall. There were day and night, plants and animals, water and dry earth, and most importantly a man and a woman. Into that stall, God poured all of his fullness into the flesh and blood, of a baby boy, made a little less than the angels. No wonder the angels sang. No wonder the shepherds wondered. No wonder the kings of the nations came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. No wonder great and small fell on their knees and worshipped him. No wonder that God protected him from Herod. All for our wonderment at the goodness of God.

This Christmas let us praise God for his mighty work in bringing a baby boy, born of a virgin, into the stall of a little stable. Have a merry Christmas!

Wreaths Across America at Hopewell Cemetery – Donna Spinks

For the third year Hopewell United Methodist Church will participate in the Wreaths Across America program by laying wreaths to honor the military veterans who rest in Hopewell Cemetery. Each veteran who is buried at Hopewell will receive a wreath in memory of their service. We will not be *decorating graves*, instead we will be *celebrating the lives* of the 25 men and women who lived in our community, raised their children here, and (several of whom) worshiped in our little church.

After the worship service on December 17 there will be a short introductory program for laying of nine ceremonial wreaths, one for each branch of the military and one for our local first responders and health care providers. This year, special recognition will be given to Nancy Gore's mother, the late Eleanor Sawyer, a Women's Army Corps veteran of WW II.



Who wants to play Scrabble? – Marsha Clayborne

After the holidays, the weather gets colder and some of us have extra time. Being inside all winter long, we could get cabin fever. If you are interested in getting together to play Scrabble, give me a call or text...Marsha Clayborne at 740-501-5841.

Happy Birthday, Bev Lahmon! – Donna Spinks

The Hopewell congregation celebrated long-time member Bev Lahmon's umpteenth birthday after the worship service on Sunday, October 15. She was wonderfully surprised and flooded with love and birthday cards.



Song History: The Intriguing History of 'O Holy Night' --by Crystal Caviness, UMC Communications

The story of “O Holy Night” is as dramatic as when the popular Christmas carol crescendos to the verse that rings out, “Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born!”

Scandal, politics, and ground-breaking moments power the history of the popular Christmas song. While sorting out fact from fiction may leave a narrative less spectacular than legend, the popularity of “O Holy Night” has never waned across the centuries.

Just the facts, more or less

Concerning the facts, the when is a bit fluid but the where, the who and the why are generally undisputed. In 1843 or 1847 in the small French town of Roquemaure, a local poet named Placide Cappeau was asked by the priest to write a Christmas poem to commemorate the renovation of the church organ. After composing the poem, Cappeau asked Adolphe Adam, a popular composer, to set the lines to music. History claims the song titled “Cantique de Noel” debuted in 1847 at a midnight mass and became a favorite among French congregations.

What follows is a story of intrigue that definitely makes for good reading though scholars place doubt on its accuracy. Cappeau allegedly was not a religious man and, after writing the lyrics to “O Holy Night,” is said to have denounced the church to join a socialist movement. Likewise, many publications report that Adam was Jewish. Having a popular Christian church song whose authors either weren’t religious or who didn’t celebrate the birth of Jesus was unacceptable to the Catholic Church in France, so the song was banned for more than two decades. In recent years, however, the story of Adam’s Jewish heritage has been disputed.

From France to America

As the song gained popularity in France, an American writer, John Sullivan Dwight, discovered “O Holy Night” in 1855. Inspired by the lyrics about Christ’s victory over sin and our shared humanity, Dwight slightly revised the third verse to read, “Truly, he taught us to love one another; his law is love and his gospel is peace. Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother; and in his name all oppression shall cease.”

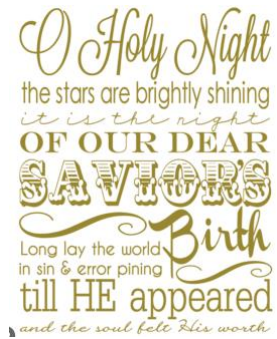
He published the updated version in his magazine, “Dwight’s Journal of Music,” which propelled the song to popularity in the United States and, particularly, in the North during the Civil War as abolitionists related to the anti-slavery sentiment.

A radio hit across the world

Another bit of trivia about “O Holy Night” is the claim that it was the first song ever broadcast live. Canadian inventor Reginald Fessenden, a protégé of Thomas Edison, was an early pioneer of radio broadcasting. He alleges that on December 21, 1906, he broadcast a recording of Handel’s “Largo,” followed by himself reading from the Gospel of Luke and then playing “O Holy Night” on the violin. This exciting placement in history, though, has been questioned. Some records say that Fessenden actually played “Adore and Be Still” and misremembered it in the retelling.

Even if “O Holy Night” can’t claim the distinction, the song has been recorded hundreds of times throughout the world by the likes of Mariah Carey, Celine Dion, Josh Groban, Lauren Daigle, the cast of “Glee,” Martina McBride and Tommy Drennan and the Monarchs who reached No. 1 on the Official Irish Singles Chart in 1971 with their version.

Whether Cappeau was an atheist, Adam was Jewish or Fessenden marked the first broadcasted performance with the popular Christmas song seems not to matter. More than 175 years later, at Christmas Eve services throughout the world, congregations rejoice in the promise brought by Jesus’ divine birth by singing the words, “With a thrill of hope, a weary world rejoices.”



Did You Know...About John Wesley? --by the editors of
Christian History Institute

...John Wesley (1703-1791) was *one of eighteen children*, eight of whom died in infancy.

...Before John and Charles Wesley went to Georgia as missionaries in 1735, they consulted their mother, who said, "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice if they were all so employed, *though I should never see them more.*"

...He *never intended* to form a church separate from the Anglican Church. The separation occurred as a result of his personally ordaining preachers destined for America after the Revolutionary War. "Ordination is separation."

...John Wesley rode far enough on horseback to circle the earth 10 times. He rode 250,000 miles! He was convinced that it was important for him personally to spread the gospel through relationships and continue to grow closer to God in those relationships.

...At John Wesley's death in 1791 his followers numbered 79,000 in England and 40,000 in America, but by 1957 there were 40 million Methodists world-wide! [Ed. note: In 2023 there are an estimated 13 million Methodists in the world...about 6.5 million in the U.S.]



John Wesley preaches in the meeting house of Mathew Bagshaw in Nottingham, England, in 1747.

But wait, there's more: John Wesley was a prolific writer, but he never published a Christmas sermon. One reason may be that when the Puritans rose to power in mid-1600s England, Christmas fell out of favor. Authorities passed laws attempting to prohibit the celebration of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, some towns even sent criers to call out, "No Christmas! No Christmas!"

It wasn't until the mid-1800s, that Christmas had a resurgence in England. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were of German background and popularized the Christmas tree tradition in England. The popularity of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* published in 1843 may also account for the holiday's resurgence.

Special December Events....

Sunday, Dec 3 – Trim-a-Tree program

Join in Hopewell church's traditional Trim-a-Tree program at 5:30 PM. Children of all ages will decorate the sanctuary tree. There will a carol sing, a potluck meal (bring a favorite food or dessert to share), and a silent auction (bring a white elephant item for the auction).

Sunday, Dec 17 – Wreaths Across America

After the Sunday service, wreaths will be placed on the graves of military veterans. (See article on p. 2)

Sunday, Dec 24– Christmas Eve

What would Christmas Eve be without candle lighting, much-loved hymns, and the story of the first Christmas, and Holy Communion? The Hopewell Christmas Eve service with all these elements will take place on December 24, time TBD.

Hopewell Birthdays

December

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

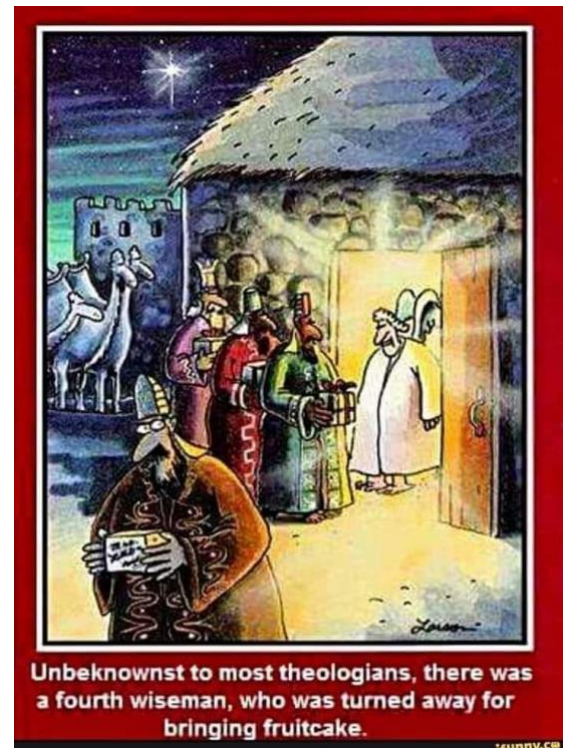
January

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

A Look Back 10 Years—to Hopewell Newsletter 2013-6

Blessing of the Pets -- Karolyn Smith

On October 13th at 2PM, the pets at Hopewell United Methodist Church were blessed by Pastor David Havens with assistance from Rev. Don Newland. There were six furry four-legged friends (dogs) who were blessed. Parker, Daisy, Jesse and Tara were among them. They were all bright-eyed and ready to be blessed. Many other pets (13-14) were blessed in spirit with their master proudly wearing (or holding) a picture of their pets. Three community people attended, two from Mt. Vernon and one from Beckholt Road. Pastor David said, "I encourage you to have a pet blessing every day, as you pray with and over our pets." Each pet received a certificate of blessing and a treat. The humans enjoyed refreshments. Thank you to all who participated or helped. *[Editor's note: Thanks to Karolyn and Mary Smith for proposing, planning, and publicizing this activity.]*



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December 2023							Jan 2024 ▶
◀ Nov 2023	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 -Nat'l Christmas Lights Day	2 -World Pear Day B1G Championship
3 -Int'l Day of Persons with Disabilities 9:30 Worship/Holy Communion B'day: Jessie Gourley	4 -Wildlife Conservation Day	5 -Int'l Volunteer Day	6 -Nat'l Miners Day	7 -Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1941) B'day: Joan Coon B'day: Donna Spinks B'day: Joe Beran	8 -Nat'l Brownie Day B'day: Bev Pottmeyer	9 -Christmas Card Day	
10 -Dewey Decimal System Day 9:30 Worship/ Refreshments 5:30 PM Hanging of the Greens	11 -UNICEF Birthday	12 -Nat'l Poinsettia Day	13 -Nat'l Cocoa Day	14 -Nat'l Free Shipping Day	15 -Nat'l Underdog Day B'day: Dean Purdy	16 -Nat'l Wreaths Across America Day B'day: Theo Wells	
17 -Wright Brothers Day 9:30 Worship 10:30 Wreaths Across America B'day: Jack Laymon	18 -Int'l Migrants Day	19 -Nat'l Emo Day B'day: Jeff Scott	20 -Int'l Human Solidarity Day	21 Start of Winter (Winter Solstice)	22 -Nat'l Short Person Day	23 -Festivus	
24 -Christmas Eve 9:30 Worship	25 Christmas	26 -Kwanzaa	27 -Int'l Day of Epidemic Preparedness	28 -Nat'l Call a Friend Day	29 -No Interruptions Day	30 -Nat'l Bacon Day	
31 New Year's Eve 9:30 Worship B'day: Vanessa Douglas	-Read a New Book Month -Seasonal Depression Awareness Month -Safe Toys and Gifts Month						

January 2024							Feb 2024 ▶
◀ Dec 2023	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 New Year's Day -Commitment Day -Polar Bear Plunge Day B'day: Dave Gore	2 -Science Fiction Day	3 -Fruitcake Toss Day	4 -Trivia Day	5 -Bird Day	6 -Bean Day
7 9:30 Worship/Holy Communion	8 -Clean Off Your Desk Day B'day: Anneliese Scott	9 -Word Nerd Day	10 -Cut Your Energy Costs Day	11 -Learn Your Name in Morse Code Day	12 -Marzipan Day	13 -Make Your Dreams Come True Day	
14 -Organize Your Home Day 9:30 Worship/Refreshments	15 Martin Luther King Jr. B'day: Joe Laymon	16 -Nothing Day	17 -Benjamin Franklin Day	18 -Thesaurus Day	19 -Popcorn Day	20 -Penguin Awareness Day	
21 9:30 Worship	22 -Hot Sauce Day	23 -Handwriting Day	24 -Global Belly Laugh Day	25 -Opposite Day	26 -Spouses Day -Fun at Work Day	27 -Chocolate Cake Day	
28 -Data Privacy Day 9:30 Worship	29 -Puzzle Day	30 -Croissant Day	31 -Backwards Day	-National Bath Safety Month -National Blood Donor Month -National Mentoring Month -National Hobby Month			B'day: Stephanie Scott

Hopewell United Methodist Church
c/o Bob & Linda Joseph, newsletter editors
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“Let us go now to Bethlehem,”
They said that holy night.
Unlearned, those hillside shepherds?
No, wisdom at its height.

Beginning about 1964, Bob Joseph’s Aunt Mary Cryder (1926-2009) created an original Christmas poem each year. This poem is from 1987.