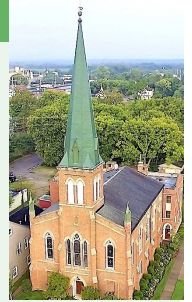




The Steeple Bell— December 2023

Franklin First United Methodist Church

“Under the Green Steeple”



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF Persons with Disabilities AWARENESS DAY

December 3 is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities Awareness Day. More than 1.3 billion people experience significant disability, which represents 16% of the global population. Many persons with disabilities die earlier, are at increased risk of developing a range of health conditions and experience more limitations in functioning than the rest of the population.

The Americans with Disabilities Act passed in the U.S. thirty years ago. One strength of this act is the fairly detailed guidelines for how to accommodate a wide range of physical and mental disabilities. It established what “equal opportunity”, and “reasonable accommodation” means for people with disabilities. But the question remains: what should we all know about disability?

- 1. There are many different kinds of disability, and no one disability is any “better” or “worse” than another.** Each condition is different and calls for different responses. They all produce some combination of practical barriers, medical and mental hardships, and social hurdles and stigma imposed from the outside – from other people and social practices and systems.
- 2. All people with any disability should be treated with respect at all times.** Responses to people with disabilities are not “one size fits all.” Different disabilities *don’t justify* different human rights, standards of respect, or basic priorities. Regardless of the type and degree of disability, we need to communicate with adults as adults. Everyone is entitled to choices and the ability to exercise as much personal control as they can, on their own or with assistance.
- 3. Disabilities can be hard, but they aren’t always terrible.** Most disabled people experience hardships directly and indirectly related to their disabilities. Think of this as a pie chart: for each person there is a different ratio between direct suffering and indirect suffering caused by other people’s ableism, systemic failures, and lack of accessibility. Some days, chronic pain, sudden muscle spasms, or loss of mobility are worse. Some days, mental depression or confusion make functioning difficult. Disability isn’t a single definable experience. Some days are better than others.
- 4. Some disabled people benefit from privilege, others not so much.** Privilege can’t by itself cure disease, lessen pain, or erase barriers. But money can pay for personal help, adaptive equipment, and a host of other material cushions to make life secure enough for a chance to be safe, fun, and fulfilling. Of course, personality, courage, and values play a role with all disabled people – but everyone struggles periodically.
- 5. What most disabled people want most deeply is to be seen, heard, believed, and taken seriously.** One of the great ironies of living with disabilities is that while disabilities are often impossible to miss, those with disabilities often feel invisible and long to be noticed and acknowledged. At the same time, some work just as hard to *not* be noticed, to hide or sideline their disabilities in order to be seen and accepted for their other qualities. Especially for those with less obvious disabilities, it is a common experience to not be believed and even regarded as fakers. “Just get over it and get on with life” and other hurtful attitudes take a deep emotional toll for those already struggling. Visibility, trust, and authentic respect are crucial.

Friends, I have a deeper understanding of all these issues since my husband Lee became a paraplegic. I am still learning sensitivity and deeper understanding each day – not only for Lee but for others who deal with the challenges of living with disability. May God open each of our hearts and minds to the unique beauty, gifts, and strength found in each of his children. Pastor Laura



International
Day of
Persons with
Disabilities

3 DECEMBER

Your Generosity is a Blessing

The year 2023 is almost ready to draw to a close, and Franklin First has engaged in some amazing ministry this year:

- ◆ More than 3,800 weekend snack packs will have been distributed to Anthony Wayne children in need. This year, Franklin High School's National Honor Society has partnered with us to provide items for snack packs and student assistance with packaging the snack packs. We are so grateful for their help!
- ◆ We are providing literacy tutoring for ten second grade students at Anthony Wayne. These kids also receive free books regularly for their home library.



The students love the relationships they build with their tutors.

- ◆ Our church has taken meals for Anthony Wayne staff appreciation multiple times.
- ◆ We collected school supplies within the church and outside of the Franklin Walmart. These supplies were divided up between all the schools in Franklin.
- ◆ We have participated in community events like the Wettest Parade in Ohio (July 4), National Night Out, the Food Truck Kick-off, and the Community Trick or Treat – increasing our visibility in the area.

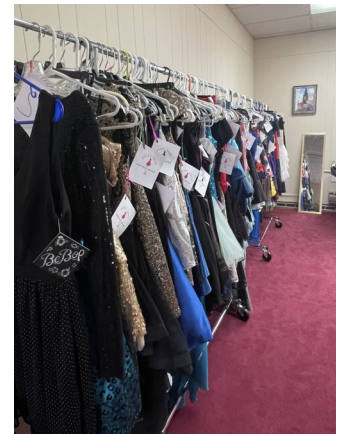
◆ Our Free Medical Clinic provided care for more than 180 uninsured or underinsured people this year. We also continue to offer free small-scale durable medical equipment such as walkers, crutches, braces, and bath aid devices.

- ◆ The Angel Shop Boutique was blessed with continued formal wear donations and welcomed about 50 young people who chose their special occasion attire free of charge.

◆ Our FFUMC kids collected \$1,000 in the noisy bucket for Heifer Project International to provide animals for needy families around the world.

- ◆ Monthly birthday contributions totaling \$960 will have been given to the following charities: The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Abilities First, Big Brother/Big Sisters of Cincinnati, and Franklin High School Senior Fees.

- ◆ FFUMC is administrating the Christmas food and gift ministry for approximately 52 families this month. Individuals have made \$25 donations totaling \$1455, which will purchase all 52 food boxes.
- ◆ Through our 2022 Christmas offering, we donated \$377 to the Warren County Community Services Early Learning Headstart Program.
- ◆ We have made quarterly contributions to the Franklin Community Pantry of paper products, baby items, cleaning supplies, and personal care items.



- ◆ We are hosting and co-sponsoring an average of more than 300 community meals per month in partnership with Hope and Red Lion United Methodist Churches and St. Mary's Catholic Church.
- ◆ Our very active Women's Circle provided funeral dinners as requested, and supported Breast Cancer research in October with a \$400 donation from their bake sale – which was met with a triple match from the Susan Komen Foundation. The Fall Marketplace was another success, raising more than \$4,440. Workers prepared 604 batches of noodles. Amazing!



- ◆ Through Blessing Basket offerings, Franklin First was able to provide \$1,495 in financial support to the Kelly family following their house fire.

◆ Our music program has inspired us with the Chancel Choir, Women's Ensemble, and the Aspenleiter Bell Choir gracing our worship with their songs. Their musical contributions were especially meaningful as part of our 225th Anniversary worship celebration in September, which included a message given by our District Superintendent Jenn Lucas. Worship was followed by a delicious complimentary buffet dinner from TJ Chump Restaurant in Miamisburg. Bob Bowman created a splendid commemorative 225th history booklet.

- ◆ Emphasizing our social media presence and on-line worship has increased the visibility of our church in the greater Franklin area and beyond. This has resulted in more than 61,000 people engaging with us online this year, including 120 new Facebook followers. Theresa Fultz and Joe Chamberlain have spearheaded this growth in ministry.
- ◆ By the end of 2024 and since the inception of our grant awards, Franklin First will have received more than \$80,000 in grants from the Great Miami River District and the West Ohio Conference - enabling a greater impact ministry than we could financially do on our own. These grants were made possible by paying 100% of our apportionments.
- ◆ Community friends have partnered with us to provide financial resources in support of our ministry. The Ruppert Family Foundation, Franklin-Carlisle Rotary Club, the Carlisle Alumni Association, and generous people from the Franklin area have all contributed to our various ministries.

Your faithful stewardship has enabled this and more. Thank you for your year-end generosity that keeps our ministries vibrant! Pastor Laura



Men's Group Next Meeting

All men are invited to the monthly meeting of Franklin's Men's Group on the second Sunday of the month at 7:00 pm. Grow in faith and in service to others with Christian brothers. The next meeting is scheduled for **December 10th at 7 pm**



Women's Circle Update

Thanks to everyone who helped with the Fall Marketplace. So many contributed to its success. More than **\$4,440** was made and funds are still coming in as we continue to sell more noodles!

Christmas Gathering on **Monday, Dec. 11th at 6 pm** at the Bowman home, 117 Miami Ave, Franklin, OH.

Good News for 2024

Good News for 2024!

We have been notified that we will be receiving the following grants next year. These grant amounts are maximums, as we must submit receipts to receive reimbursement.

- ⇒ A Great Miami River District “Community Connection” grant in the amount of \$5,985 to support the work of the Free Medical Clinic as well as provide some of the food expense for the community dinners served twice per week out of Franklin First. This grant will also fund some of the special events we do at Anthony Wayne and in the community.
- ⇒ A Great Miami River District “Anthony Wayne One-on-One” grant in the amount of \$7,000 to support the Snack Pack program.
- ⇒ A West Ohio Conference “Go-Grant” in the amount of \$2,000 has been awarded to purchase equipment and advertising for the Angel Shop.

Once again we are benefiting from being part of a “connectional church” where apportionment dollars are reallocated to the ministries of those churches who are doing good in the community. One eligibility requirement for these grants is to have paid and continue to pay 100% of our apportionments. Your continued faithful support of the church has resulted in some real financial blessings.



Christmas Basket Ministry

We're thrilled to announce that thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, we've secured funding for all of the 52 families signed up for our Christmas Basket program — a total of \$1455. This means that dozens of families in need will receive a bountiful holiday meal, bringing joy and warmth to their homes during this special time of year.

We're incredibly grateful for the support we've received. Baskets will be distributed on Monday, December 18, from 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Together, we will make this Christmas merry for all. Thank you for your unwavering support!



Ohio Great Miami River District & West Ohio Conference E-News

The Ohio River Valley District has a weekly publication called News and Notes. To subscribe, sign up at: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/zxhnl99?source_id

The West Ohio Conference NewsNet newsletter is published twice a month and delivered to your email. Mission Mosaic is a conference quarterly publication highlighting conference mission activities. Subscribe to email newsletters at: <https://www.westohioumc.org/news>



Anthony Wayne Tutoring

Continuing in January and lasting through the end of March, we are excited to re-engage in tutoring Anthony Wayne students. This year, we are working with second graders. Tutors need to be available on Thursdays from 3:15 – about 4:30 (or whenever the designated adult picks your child up).

School staff has the lessons prepared for us. After school ends, the students will spend a short time exercising with Jenny Chilcutt to run off some steam. They then have a snack and work the rest of the time with their tutor.

Principal Jim Rhoades says that the literacy need for tutoring is significant in this class of second graders because of the COVID shut-downs that limited their opportunities for special literacy interventions. What a blessing to help a child achieve! The kids love the program and non-participating children often ask us if they can join.

We need your help! Especially during the month of February, a few of our regular tutors go south to enjoy the warmer weather. This fall, we ran close each week to having the number of tutors needed for our students. If you can sub for the month of February only – you will be a tremendous blessing. Please let Pastor Laura know ASAP if you can help fill in the gaps.



Anthony Wayne Holiday Luncheon

On Thursday, December 14, Franklin First will be serving a staff holiday luncheon for Anthony Wayne personnel. The menu is beef vegetable soup and a baked potato bar. We can use help with food, serving, and clean-up. The meal will be served on site at the school. Our educators and support staff work so hard equipping our children. Let's let them know how much we appreciate them. If you can help, talk to Pastor Laura ASAP.



Faith Seekers Sundays 9:15 am

Join our Faith Seekers group on Sunday mornings at 9:15 am.

All are invited!

Sunday Worship

If you are interested in helping with Sunday Worship as an usher or greeter, please contact the [office](#).



An Unlikely Advent

The season of Advent precedes Christmas, and we observe Advent on the four Sundays before Christmas – this year beginning December 3.

Our Advent focus this year will be on the “extraordinary” people in the Christmas story. Our nativities include Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus. But we never see Herod the Great in a nativity scene, with good reason. He was a villain in a shining story. We will consider Herod, the smelly shepherds, and senior citizens Zechariah and Elizabeth as we flesh out details that show us that the “silent, holy night” was not quite as pristine as we typically envision.



Next Mission & Outreach Meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 9th
6:30 pm



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS



- **DECEMBER 3-24:** THE FOUR SUNDAYS OF ADVENT WITH ADVENT WREATH LIGHTINGS AND A SERMON FOCUS ON “AN UNLIKELY ADVENT.”
- **DECEMBER 3:** BLESSING OF THE NATIVITIES DURING WORSHIP. BRING A PIECE OF YOUR HOME NATIVITY SET.
- **DECEMBER 10:** CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM.
- **DECEMBER 17:** CHRISTMAS MUSIC CELEBRATION AT 10:45 AM.
- **DECEMBER 24:** WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10:45 AM.
- **DECEMBER 24:** CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE AT 7:00 PM.
- **DECEMBER 31:** WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10:45 AM, INCLUDING A CAROL SING.



Have you checked the bottom of your Kroger’s Receipt? If it does not list our church as your designated Community Rewards Beneficiary, follow the instructions on the back and get signed up now! Please note our new church number! You do not need to change your current account; this is for new sign-ups.

KROGER
COMMUNITY
REWARDS:

Go to:
www.krogers.com

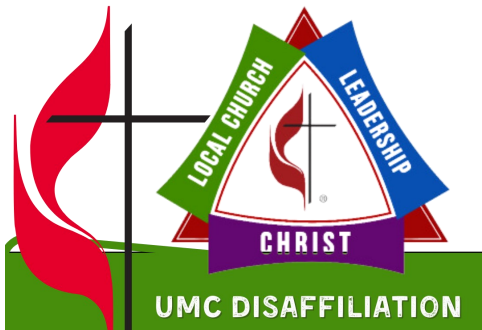
New account users:
go to “Register”
Create Account
Or Sign-in

Go to: Community –
Community Rewards
Click: Enroll now
Church #: RK151

West Ohio Conference & Disaffiliations

This has been a season of discernment in the United Methodist Church. Bishops across the denomination have called regularly-scheduled and special confer-

ences to deal with church disaffiliations and changes in clergy status. As you likely know, The United Methodist Church has



been struggling for multiple decades over differences in theology and LGBTQ participation in the life of the church. In May 2022, the Global Methodist Church launched, a new denomination with conservative theology on these issues. Faithful followers of Christ at all points on the theological continuum are trying to discern their response to these dividing issues.

Currently, our Book of Discipline has very conservative language addressing human sexuality. This language was upheld by vote at the last General Conference. Across the denomination, many Annual Conferences and individual congregations have taken issue with this outcome. As a result, our current denomination is splitting. General Conference, the top legislative body in the United Methodist Church, is scheduled for April 23 through May 3, 2024 in Charlotte, NC. Leadership in our current denomination has stated that all churches - whether conservative, moderate, or progressive – will have a home in the future United Methodist Church.

Some of our congregations have chosen to disaffiliate and not wait to see what happens in 2024. UM News reports that the West Ohio Conference has had 348 congregations disaffiliate, while the cumulative dis-

affiliation totals denomination-wide amount to 7,286.

From Bishop Palmer: “No entity of The United Methodist Church, including the West Ohio Conference, is asking any clergy person or congregation to disaffiliate. However, we understand that a few are considering or have decided by their own choice to leave.”

There is a discernment process facilitated by each District Superintendent that exiting churches have followed governed by paragraph 2553 in the Book of Discipline. The terms of that paragraph expire at the end of 2023. Because the buildings and assets of each congregation are held in a “Trust Clause” by the local Annual Conference, each church must follow the disaffiliation process.

In recent news, UM Communications shared that the United Methodist Council of Bishops has called for a special session of General Conference in May of 2026 to give the church as a whole a clearer sense of the path going forward. The agenda would focus on re-establishing connection, lament and healing, celebration, and recasting the mission and vision for The United Methodist Church.

Let me share my thoughts. We have people at all ends of the theological continuum at Franklin First. I think it is important that we see what will happen at the 2024 General Conference, and until that time we continue to focus on mission and ministry within our community. We will not all agree on this human sexuality issue, but we can choose to think the best of people as they grapple with the faith issues underlying their understanding of these topics. We can show love and respect in our witness to our community and the world. Please see me if you have questions and/or comments.

Let us pray for Spirit-filled outcome.

Pastor Laura

What Do the Candles in Our Advent Wreath Mean?

The Advent wreath began as a German and Scandinavian home devotional practice used to mark the four weeks of Advent. Families would light a candle for each past week and the current week at their dinner or evening time of prayer. The configuration of candles, whether in a line or a circle, did not matter. Neither did the color of the candles (all colors are used in homes in Europe). What mattered was the marking of time and the increase of light each week in the face of increasing darkness as the winter solstice approached.



As Advent wreaths began to be used by congregations on Sundays in some places in Europe and America beginning in the late 19th century, several adaptations were made to make them work better in public worship spaces. Candles needed to be larger and more uniform than the "daily candles" handmade or purchased for home use. They also needed to be more uniform in color to fit with other décor in the sanctuary. That is why candles used in the Advent wreath are usually purple or blue, to coordinate with color of the paraments used during this season.

This shift in context from home to public use also made it important in the eyes of some for the candles to be given a meaning more than simply marking time and increasing light. This led to special ceremonies being developed for lighting these special candles each week.

As this practice began to catch on by the mid-twentieth century, several church supply houses who sold Advent wreaths and candles for public worship also developed resources, banners, and bulletin covers assigning a theme to each week, and thus each candle, based on scriptures from the one-year lectionaries used at that time. Those themes were Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace, in that order.

Today, almost no one uses those one-year lectionaries, so those themes may not always fit the scriptures we hear in worship. The one exception is the Third Sunday of Advent, where the current lectionaries have continued to support the centuries old observance of "Gaudete" or "Joy Sunday." That is why church supply houses often offer rose or pink colored candles for the wreath for use on this day.

So how may we talk about the meaning of the Advent wreath today?

We can reclaim the original home use of marking time with the hope of increasing light as we await the return of Christ, that day when "The city no longer has need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it, because the glory of God illumines it, and its lamp is the lamb."

And we can develop meanings or themes for each week based on the focus of the scriptures themselves. After all, the candles and the wreath are an accessory, not an end in themselves. Their meaningfulness comes from how we use them to point toward Christ, the world's true light, who was, and is, and is to come.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communi-cations.

Taken From: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-do-the-candles-in-our-advent-wreath-mean>

Living Legacy



A Lasting Legacy

How would you like to leave a lasting legacy for your church? By giving to the Permanent Endowment Fund, you can ensure that your generosity will continue to bless future generations. Your gift will grow through wise investment and support the church's mission in many ways. You will be giving HOPE to:

- Those who seek God's grace and salvation.
- Those who find comfort and friendship in this church family.
- Those who learn about God's love as children and grow in faith.
- Those who celebrate life's joys and sorrows in this sacred space.

Those who serve and share Christ's peace in a troubled world. The Permanent Endowment Fund is a special way to extend your financial support. You can make a one-time gift (especially through estate planning) or regular contributions. Your legacy will live on as a gift of hope.

December at Franklin First

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Blessing of the Nativities

9:30 am Faith Seekers Study
 10:45 am Livestream of Worship
 10:45 am Worship Service
 11 am Children's Church

Tuesday, December 5

4:30 pm Community Dinner
 (Hope/Red Lion UMC)
 5:30 pm Free Medical Clinic

Wednesday, December 6

1:30 pm Snack Pack Packing
 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal
 7:30pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 7

4pm Community Dinner
 (St. Mary's K of C)

Sunday, December 10th

Second Sunday of Advent

Children's Christmas Program

Fellowship Sunday

9:30 am Faith Seekers
 10:40 am Children's Nursery
 10:45 am Livestream of Worship
 10:45 am Worship Service
 11 am Children's Church
 7 pm Men's Group

Monday, December 11

6:00 pm Women's Circle
 Christmas Gathering;

Tuesday, December 12

5:30 pm Free Medical Clinic

Wednesday, December 13

3:00 pm Snack Pack Packing
 6:30 pm Choir Rehearsal
 7:30 pm Handbell Rehearsal

Thursday, December 14

10:40 am Holiday Lunch served
 at Anthony Wayne
 4 pm Community Dinner
 (St. Mary's K of C)

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Christmas Music Sunday

9:30 am Faith Seekers
 10:40 am Children's Nursery
 10:45 am Livestream of Worship
 10:45 am Worship Service
 11 am Children's Church

Monday, December 18

1—6 pm Christmas Basket
 Distribution

Tuesday, December 19

5:30 pm Free Medical Clinic

Wednesday, December 20

6:30 pm Choir Rehearsal
 7:30 pm Handbell Rehearsal

Thursday, December 21

4 pm Community Dinner
 (St. Mary's K of C)

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Service

9:30 am Faith Seekers
 10:45 am Livestream of Worship
 10:45 am Worship Service
 7 pm Christmas Candlelight
 Service

Monday, December 25

Merry Christmas! The Savior is Born!

Tuesday, December 26

Office Closed

4:30 pm Community Dinner
 (Hope/Red Lion UMC)
 5:30pm Free Medical Clinic

Wednesday, December 27

Office Open: 10 am—2:30 pm

Thursday, December 28

Office Closed

4pm Community Dinner
 (St. Mary's K of C)

Sunday, December 31

New Year's Eve

9:30am Faith Seekers
 10:45am Livestream of Worship
 10:45am Worship Service

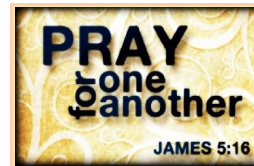


Birthdays

December 04 Ken Smith
 December 08 Ken Lang
 December 10 Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
 December 11 Mishelle Dicken
 December 11 Greyson Roberts
 December 12 Lisa Dillon
 December 16 Caleb Humphries
 December 17 Andrew Goodpaster
 December 20 Judy Bowman
 December 21 Mike Smith
 December 23 Joseph Chamberlain
 December 25 Janet Kirby
 December 26 Amber Ramsey
 December 26 Gary Ogden
 December 27 Gracelyne Lucas
 December 29 Karen Anderson
 December 31 Cody Chilcutt

Anniversaries

December 16 Caleb & Marisa Humphries
 December 27 Jan & Julie Abell
 December 28 Robert & Judy Bowman



Submit a Prayer Request Anytime

Use the link below to submit a Prayer Request anytime. The link will send an email directly to the Pastor and our prayer warriors will begin the prayers for your request.

franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/862a54



Franklin First Online Giving

Online giving is a great choice for when you are unable to join us for Worship to continue to support the church. You can either set-up a recurring payment or give each time you visit the site.

Connect by using this link:

<https://franklinfirstumc.org/giving-%26-member-resources>

We know the stories in the Bible, attend [Advent](#) and [Christmas](#) Eve worship each year, listen to tons of [Christmas carols](#), and have seen just about every Christmas movie and special. We United Methodists [know a lot about Christmas](#), but like most things there is always more to learn. Here are a few lesser-known tidbits.

JOHN WESLEY NEVER PUBLISHED A CHRISTMAS SERMON

If you search for Christmas sermons by John Wesley, you won't find any. He never published one.

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!"



John Wesley was a prolific writer, but he never published a Christmas sermon. Photo illustration by Kathryn Price, United Methodist Communications.

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.

John Wesley's [Methodist movement](#) began in England during those 200 years of Christmas suppression. As a result, there is no evidence they celebrated Christmas other than with a special worship service.

Many of the English emigrants to America at this time were also Puritans who were suspicious of Christmas celebrations. In 1600s Boston, they passed a law under which people were to be fined 5 shillings for not working on Christmas. It was not until 1870 that Christmas became a national holiday in the U.S.

Some speculate the Methodist preachers may have chosen to begin the founding conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church on Christmas Eve 1784 because they were all available. Methodists would later refer to that gathering as the [Christmas Conference](#).

CHARLES WESLEY WROTE A POPULAR CHRISTMAS SONG

John Wesley never published a Christmas sermon, but his hymn-writing brother Charles wrote songs for the season from the very beginning. The first Methodist hymnbook, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), includes Charles' "Hymn for Christmas-Day." The song begins, "Hark how all the welkin rings, 'Glory to the King of

kings.'" Another Methodist preacher would change the opening line to words we know much better, "[Hark! the Herald Angel Sings](#)."

In a later publication, *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*, Wesley published 18 more hymns for the season. We still sing one of the songs in that collection, "[Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus](#)." The words in our [United Methodist Hymnal](#) today are almost exactly as Charles wrote them in 1745.

One wonders if Charles was the bigger fan of Christmas because [his birthday](#) is exactly a week before, December 18, 1707.

NATIVITIES ARE FILLED WITH SYMBOLISM

What our nativities lack in historical accuracy is often due to the [inclusion of powerful symbolism](#). For example, the baby Jesus figurine sometimes has outstretched arms, despite the angels' words to the shepherds that they would find him "swaddled and lying in a manger." The open arms are a sign of welcome, an invitation to receive the salvation we know in Christ. Other elements like animals, trees, and wells also have symbolic significance. Read "[Nativity scenes: More than meets the eye](#)" to learn more about your nativity set.

Many United Methodists also [participate in Las Posadas](#), a symbolic representation of the Nativity journey from the tradition of Latin American Christians. Each of the nine nights before Christmas, "commemorating the nine months Mary carried the infant Jesus in her womb and emphasizing his coming again," explains [The United Methodist Book of Worship](#), the people travel together to a

(Continued on page 11)

The words we sing in "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" are nearly exactly the way Charles Wesley published them in the 1700s. Photo by Joe Iovino, United Methodist Communications.



The open arms of Jesus in many Nativity scenes are a symbolic invitation to salvation. Photo by Kathryn Price, United Methodist Communications.

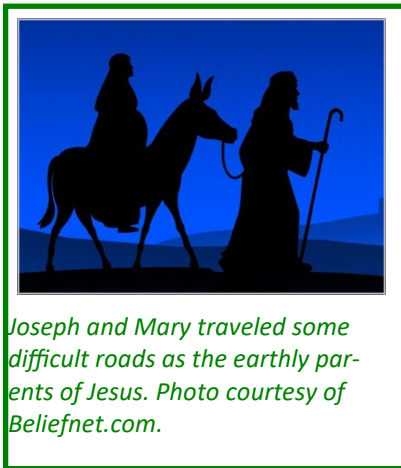
home where a host family is prepared for a celebration. When the procession arrives, they knock on the door and follow a liturgy that uses Scripture to remind everyone of the one who offered Mary and Joseph a place to stay the night Jesus was born, and our need to welcome Jesus into our lives. After the liturgy there is a piñata and food.

JOSEPH AND MARY'S JOURNEY

It may surprise even those who have been Christians for years, to learn how little we know about the [man who raised Jesus](#). Joseph is only mentioned in 16 verses in the Bible and none of his words are recorded. The Bible tells us only two things definitively. His dad's name was Jacob, and he worked as a craftsman, probably a woodworker.

[Everything else we know about Joseph](#), we infer from how he responds to the news that an angel visited Mary, his betrothed, and told her she will give birth to Jesus. This could not have been easy news to hear, but even in this moment, Joseph acts nobly and faithfully. He does all he can to protect his new family and follow God wherever he leads.

One of the roads Joseph and Mary are called to travel is one from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. The approximate 100-mile journey on foot, with possible help from a donkey, took an estimated nine or ten days. In a [Get Your Spirit in Shape podcast episode](#), the Rev. Adam



Joseph and Mary traveled some difficult roads as the earthly parents of Jesus. Photo courtesy of Beliefnet.com.

Hamilton shares the response he received from a mom who was 9 months pregnant, "There's no way Joseph was getting me on a donkey, if that was me."

RED KETTLES HAVE UNITED METHODIST LINKS

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.



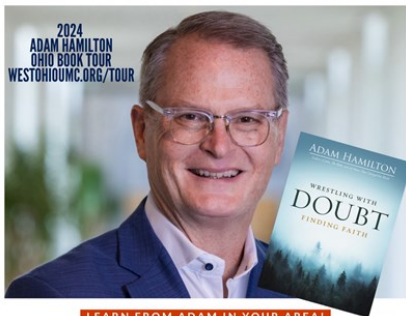
The kettles and bells of The Salvation Army have been part of the Christmas collection for many years. Photo public domain via The Library of Congress.

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.

**[Joe Iovino](#) works for [UMC.org](#) at [United Methodist Communications](#). Contact him by [email](#).*

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Taken From: <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/five-things-you-may-not-know-about-christmas>



Adam Hamilton is Coming to the District!

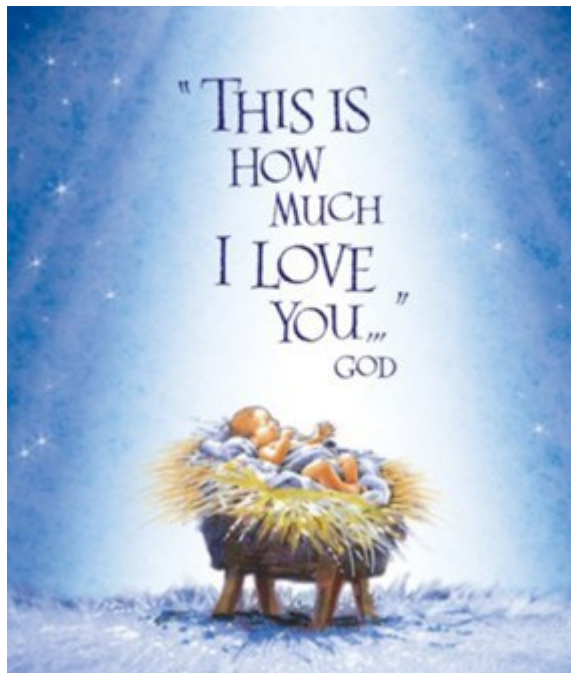
January 16 at 6:30 PM- [Register Here](#)

Rev. Adam Hamilton is touring Ohio with the release of his upcoming book, "Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith." This is an incredible opportunity to learn from a successful author of church resources and pastor of one of the most influential churches in America, The United Methodist Church of

the Resurrection in Kansas City. Each stop will be 90 minutes with a short presentation followed by a Q & A about the book. The event is free, but registration is required. Books will be available to purchase on site. [Register here](#).

LEARN FROM ADAM IN YOUR AREA!
January 16
 1:30-3pm Athens
 6:30-8pm Cincinnati
January 17
 9-10:30am Findlay
 1:30-3pm Cleveland

Each stop is 90-minutes with a presentation and Q&A about the book. Event is free for laity & clergy but registration is required. Books will be available at event.



Franklin First United Methodist Church

2024 Lay Leadership Ministry

Making disciples... Building Christian community... Transforming lives!



Church Council:

Church Council Chair	Mike Smith
Church Council Secretary	Amber Ramsey
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference	Tami Chamberlain
Lay Member of Annual Conference Alternate	Kim Chewning
Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Membership Secretary	Cheryl Cyphers
Financial Secretary	Theresa Fultz
Church Historian	Robert Bowman
Pastor	Laura Saunders

Ministry Team Representatives:

Staff-Parish	Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Finance	Paul Anderson
Endowment	Ken Smith
Trustee Chairs	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Worship	Monica Rhude
Technology	Joe Chamberlain
Committee on Lay Leadership	Laura Saunders
Christian Education	Joe Wright, Rhonda Roberson
Missions & Outreach	Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Care Team	Lee Saunders
Hospitality & Events	TBD
Welcoming Ministry	Dorothy Rayburg
Women's Circle	Monica Rhude
Member At Large	Kaylee Glossip
Member At Large	Amber Ramsey

Staff-Parish Relations Committee:

Chair: Peggy Darragh-Jeromos	Lay Leader: Mike Smith
Terms expiring 2024:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson, Patti Noland
Terms expiring 2025	Cheryl Cyphers, Mishelle Dicken
Terms expiring 2026	Sue Fullen, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos, Pam Trout

Trustees: Co-Chairs: Jim Martin, Mike Runyan

Terms expiring 2024:	Jan Abell, Jim Martin, Trisha Dicken
Terms expiring 2025:	Cody Chilcutt, Mike Runyan, Connie Bolinger
Terms expiring 2026:	Gary Ogden, Joe Chamberlain, Joe Wright

Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations):

Chair: Pastor Laura Saunders	Mike Smith, Lay Leader
Terms expiring 2024:	Ken Smith, Shirley Berold
Terms expiring 2025:	Kathy Martin, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Terms expiring 2026:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson

Finance Committee: (By virtue of office.)

Chair	Paul Anderson
Treasurer:	Tami Chamberlain
Financial Secretary:	Theresa Fultz
Church Council Chair:	Mike Smith
Trustees Co-Chairs:	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Staff Parish Chair:	Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference:	Tami Chamberlain
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Permanent Endowment Fund Committee

Chair of Finance Committee	Paul Anderson
Church Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Chair of Board of Trustees	Jim Martin
Chair of Church Council	Mike Smith
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Member at Large (Term: 2023-24)	Monica Rhude
Member at Large (Term: 2024-25)	Ken Smith
Pastor (non-voting member)	Laura Saunders

Worship Ministry Team: Chair: Monica Rhude

Choir Director:	Monica Rhude
Bell Choir Director:	Tami Chamberlain
Altar Design:	Kay Marksberry, Pam Bishop, Shari Tutt, Carol Runyan
Technology:	Joe Chamberlain
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Mission & Outreach Team:

Co-Chairs: Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Madelyn Lang, Karen Anderson, Tami Chamberlain, Marna Rogers, Sally Fitzgerald,

Technology Team: Chair: Joe Chamberlain

Joe Chamberlain, Trisha Dicken, Andy Kuntzman, Tami Chamberlain, LeeAnn Lee, Paul Anderson, Rick Chamberlain

Christian Education Team:

Co-Chairs: Joe Wright (Adult) Rhonda Roberson (Children)
Jan Truesdell, Rachel Chamberlain, Madelyn Lang, Carol Runyan, Joe Wright, Rhonda Roberson

Care Team: Chair: Lee Saunders

Lee Saunders (phone contact); Charlotte Summer, Dorothy Rayburg, Jan Truesdell, Judy Deskins (visitation team)

Franklin First United
Methodist Church

Pastor
Laura Saunders



**Sunday Worship
Service**

10:45 am

Livestreaming on Facebook

Faith Seekers Bible Study

Sundays, 9:15 am

Upcoming Events

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| December 3 | First Sunday of Advent |
| December 3 | Blessing of the Nativities |
| December 10 | Children's Christmas Program |
| December 17 | Christmas Music Celebration |
| December 24 | Worship Service—10:45 am |
| December 24 | Candlelight Christmas Eve Service - 7 pm |
| December 31 | Worship Service (Carol Sing) - 10:45 am |

Franklin First United Methodist Church

303 South Main St.
Franklin, OH 45005

Phone: 937-746-5232

E-mail: office@franklinfirstumc.org

PLEASE
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