



*News, Views,  
&  
Gospel Truths*

EAST NAPLES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | DECEMBER 2020

## The Mystery of Faith:

### **Incarnation In the Midst Of Empire**

The empires of this world come and go. This is a most important point for people of faith to always bear in mind. Every empire has had its marvelous “golden age” and its agony of eventual decline. History does indeed bear this out:

Egyptian empire lasted from 3000 B.C. – 1000 B.C.

The Assyrian empire lasted from 900 B.C. – 612 B.C.

The Babylonian empire lasted from 612 B.C. – 539 B.C.

The Persian Empire lasted from 550 B.C. – 334 B.C.

Alexander the Great and the Macedonians from 336 B.C. – 323 B.C.

The Roman Empire lasted from 31 B.C. – 450 A.D.

The Han Dynasty of China lasted from 202 B.C. – 220 A.D.

The Gupta Dynasty of India lasted from 320 A.D. – 550 A.D.

The Byzantine Empire lasted from about 550 A.D. – 1500 A.D.

The Kingdom of Ghana lasted from 400 A.D. – 1203 A.D.

The Kingdom of Mali lasted from 1250 A.D. – 1460 A.D.

The Kingdom of Songhai lasted from 1335 A.D. – 1600 A.D.

The Mayan empire lasted from 100 A.D. – 909 A.D.

The Aztec empire lasted from 1325 A.D. – 1521 A.D.

The Incan empire lasted from 1350 A.D. – 1493 A.D.

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The global conflicts of the twentieth century that unfolded in two distinct theaters, Europe and Asia, was a struggle involving empires: Winston Churchill and Great Britain, Mussolini and Italian Fascism, Hitler and Germany's expansionist's ambitions, Stalin and Russian Communism, Japan's ambitions in Asia and the Pacific, and Truman's Atomic bomb. However, history discloses that Israel and the Church continue to be.

The drama of empire and church can be illuminated by the anthropological studies of James C. Scott in his text *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Scott suggests that in oppressed peasant communities the peasants maintain a "hidden transcript," a coded account of reality that is not public or known by the overlords, an account that tells the truth about social reality and that regularly subverts the pretentious posturing and oppressive policies of the powerful. The hidden transcript empowers the vulnerable in a way that may eventually defeat the false script of the overlords.

Over the past several weeks, I have been reading over and through Exodus 12, the birth narratives of Jesus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Martin Luther King's *Where Do We Go from Here* and some poems by Langston Hughes. And it dawned on me that the hidden transcript of the church in the midst of empire always takes the form of subversive resistance: bearing witness against the arrogant autonomy of empire with its shameless militarism and its aggressive economic expansionism. That hidden transcript is one that we utter and enact every time we take part in liturgy, whereby we imagine the world differently. In that hidden transcript the Church regularly confesses:

That God created the heavens and the earth;  
That Jesus Christ was **born of the Virgin Mary**;  
That he showed how broken bread is ample nourishment;  
That he showed that poured-out wine is the nectar of new life;  
That we anticipate the coming regime, for to none other belongs "the kingdom and the power and the glory."

This month the Church will joyously celebrate and remember that the Son of God was born just as Caesar (the emperor) sent out a decree. Throughout these lands church upon church will read, dramatize, sing about, and preach the story of God's enfleshment within the concrete domain of human history and human empires. As there will be acts rendered in worship by the Christian community, you will find that Caesar is everywhere in the narrative as God takes on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The emperor is highly visible and powerful. You can find the "emperor narrative" played out each day on both the national and global stage. But the community gathered around Jesus dares to commit itself to that "alternative narrative" that the Coming One **was born in a manger**. My friends and fellow Christians, this and this only is our narrative. We do not follow the narrative of worldly empire (s).

This is the mystery of faith, not to be "explained," but to be uttered in the face of empire.

By Pastor Dwayne

## Meet the Pastor



Starting in January, with a little creativity and a whole lot of determination, Pastor Dwayne has designed a Meet & Greet event to meet with families from the ENUMC congregation.

Still taking into account all the COVID-19 protocols, Pastor Dwayne will meet with four to five families at a time, either in the large room in Elsey Hall, or the Fellowship Hall.

Would you like to meet Pastor Dwayne? Sign-up by calling the church office at 239-774-4696; [email\\_reception@enaples.org](mailto:email_reception@enaples.org); or using the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Available time slots will be every Thursday and Friday in January, between the hours of 10:00 am - 12:00 noon.

# In the Spotlight

## TLC's Mrs. Buehler and her Toddler Class



If you walk by the nursery during the week and glance through the window, you will see me interacting with The Learning Center's youngest friends. My name is Lauren Buehler, and I am the 1-2-year-old teacher. First, I would like to tell you a little about myself, and then a bit about our class.

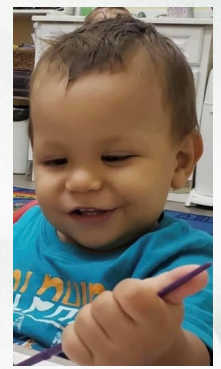
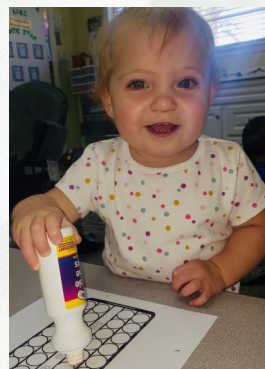
I graduated from Evangelical Christian School in 2008. From there I went on to study at Florida Southern College. I have 8-year-old twins, Izzy and Sarah. My late husband and I celebrated our 9-year anniversary in April, before his passing in June. I get to wear many hats in my personal and professional life.

Currently, we have four friends in my class, with a fifth friend joining us soon. Five toddlers may sound overwhelming, but I have been with the preschool since 2015 and in this position since 2017. In fact, one of the children from our first toddler class will be graduating from our VPK program this school year.

When you walk by our classroom and catch a glimpse of our day, it may look like we are just playing. Truthfully, we are doing so much more than that. While we play with the shape sorters, we are also practicing social skills by taking turns and sharing. We

review our colors, shapes and early math skills by sorting the toys into groups based on those descriptions. Every activity can be a teachable moment.

I know what you are thinking; they are just toddlers, how much can they really understand or retain? I would like to answer that with a story. We start every morning with circle time. During this time, we recite our pledges, read our Bible story, and work on our letter, number, color, and shape of the week. Then we finish up with a few songs. The children love the song, "My God is so big." The last line in the song is "There's nothing my God cannot do ... for you". One of my friends would get very upset and say "No, for you, for me." I would then explain how God is big enough to be for everyone and how He wants us to share him. This went on every day for a few weeks, until one day at the end of the song, she said, "No, Buehler. God is for everyone." That moment when a child finally understands something or figures out how something works is why I love my job. Proverbs 22:6 tells us to train up a child in the way that he or she should go, so that when they are grown they will not depart from it. While my toddlers may not remember me, I pray that they will remember how much God loves them.



# Missions



Thank you so much for your support of Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes and our Christmas Gift Program for the New Horizons and Learning Center students. Your generosity will help brighten the lives of many children in our community and our world.



## Reverse Advent Calendar

### Help us feed the hungry this advent season

East Naples UMC invites you as part of our Fill the Table Initiative to join with us in our Reverse Advent Calendar Project. A “normal” advent calendar is one where you open a little door & receive a treat or small present each day of the advent season. The reverse advent calendar works the same way but instead of opening & receiving a gift you are putting something aside each day for a food bank. We hope you will join with our Mission's Committee this season to help us feed the hungry!

**EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BAG. AT THE END OF THE WEEK BRING YOUR DONATION TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY—OR—CALL KRIS CLEMMENSEN 513-720-8741—OR—MARY ANN PALMER 239-238-8180 TO HAVE THE BAGS PICKED UP.**

November 29 Jar of Peanut Butter

November 30 Jar of Jelly

December 1 Box of Cereal

December 2 Macaroni & Cheese

December 3 Can or Bag of Beans

December 4 Can of Soup

December 5 Canned Pasta **\*Week 1**

December 6 Canned Meat – Tuna

December 7 Canned Fruit

December 8 Can of Chili or Stew

December 10 Package of Rice

December 11 Package of Noodles

December 12 Canned Meat – Chicken **\*\*Week 2**

December 13 Pasta Sauce

December 14 Canned Meat - Ham

December 15 Can of Soup

December 16 Box of Crackers

December 17 Dessert Mix

December 18 Canned Tomatoes

December 19 Snack Food





## January Mission of the Month – Drive-Thru Dinner

Help us as we think outside the box as to how we might help feed the hungry in our community. The plan is to offer a take-out meal to the families and staff of our Learning Center on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. We will purchase ½ Chicken meals from Pollo Tropical Restaurant. We will add bottles of water, dessert and a family activity and family devotion. The meals will be distributed between 4:00-5:30pm as the parents are picking up their children from the Learning Center. The families will receive information about this activity beginning the end of November and will be asked to make reservations for the meals they would like for their families. We hope that this activity may plant a seed for an ongoing feeding activity from our church. This first event will serve the Learning Center Families. We hope that we might expand in the future to include New Horizons Families, Palm Lake Mobile Home Park Families and eventually include patrons of the Bargain Nook, Government Workers and others. Please pray for this new project and consider helping financially or with the planning and distribution of the meals.



### *What We Learned in 2020...*

- ⇒ Cherish those you love
- ⇒ Reassess what you really need
  - ⇒ Be kind
  - ⇒ Do all you can to help
- ⇒ Smile often (even behind your mask)
- ⇒ Virtual hugs are not quite the same
- ⇒ Trust God in every situation

*Kris Clemmensen*  
*Mission coordinator*

# CLT Update

## Update from the Church Leadership Team

It has been a very unusual 3 months for your CLT. There have been changes made to the Church due to the virus effecting how the church operates, employee reduction in work hours mainly due to the drastic reduction in church offerings and less participation at the Sunday Services.

But as we head into the winter season, decisions still have to be made that effect how your church operates. Since August, the following decisions have been discussed at the CLT monthly meetings. I am including most of the important decisions made these past three months.

Our online service has vastly improved due to the work put in by those responsible for getting the service out to those who have decided to stay home and attend church via Face book or YouTube. We have added a new computer to the audio/visual desk in the Sanctuary. A thanks goes to DonToij for his allowing the church to use his own equipment for Sunday's telecast. We will eventually improve our cameras and equipment but not until an improvement can be realized in the income needed for that.

Office computers are being replaced on a monthly basis. We need to replace 5 old computers as they still run windows 7 which is no longer supported by Microsoft. The costs are not great but as you know, the funds needed are not readily available at this time and thus we are replacing computers one a month. *Should anyone want to support the church by sending in donations for computers it would be of great benefit to the church.*

We will be tenting Elsey Hall during the Thanksgiving break due to termites discovered in the building. This is the best way to prevent any future invasion and neither the pre-school nor any other usage of the building will be interrupted.

Due to Brent Nicholas's leave of absence, the decision to have outside musical programs seems to be going along and we are certainly lucky to have Steve Parker and his family, our own LaVon, Luis, Jody DeSalvo and all the others adding to helping out with the music. Until Covid is under somewhat control and we have our wonderful Choir back and singing will be allowed, we will continue this programming.

Sunday Service seems to be increasing slowly and we will continue to require everyone to follow CDC and Methodist Recommendations on how to have gatherings. Your safety is most important and we thank each of you for following the guidelines.

Lastly, your team is working on next year's budget. There are going to be additional changes made in the creating of the 2021 budget. Based on the reductions that were required due to the lower contributions received since COVID-19 began, these changes are required. Please refer to the bulletin each week which can be viewed on the churches webpage to see how the church is doing financially. If you have any questions concerning the church, please don't hesitate to contact either Pastor Dwayne or me and we will be happy to answer them.

Stay safe. Bless you all.

**Tom McElroy- Facilitator**



## Bargain Nook News

I am happy to report that the Bargain Nook is doing well. All the volunteers that have been helping since we opened up on June 16th are healthy. We have been so blessed to have these loyal volunteers who make the Nook a happy place to shop.

Our customers have shown us such respect in following our guidelines as they enter the store. All wear a mask and sanitize their hands and are happy to wait their turn to come inside. So many have told us how grateful they are and consider it an outing just to come to the store. Sales have been good considering the 2020 circumstances. I feel like we have enough customers but not enough inventory. Donations have been very slow to come in which is definitely a result of the Coronavirus. We certainly appreciate the donations we do receive and of course all income is given to the church operating fund.

We have many wonderful Christmas items out now... but as always, we need linens, jewelry, and kitchen items. We are open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Thank you and God Bless us all.

**Carol**

# Family Ministries

December is here and I am looking forward to the Christmas Season! It will certainly be a different Christmas but it will be Christmas nevertheless. We have all been impacted by COVID-19 and have had to make changes on how we live our lives. But even with the challenges of the pandemic, it will still be Christmas! No pandemic or crisis is powerful enough to overshadow the electrifying truth that we celebrate at Christmas. That is that God Himself came to this earth and He came to look for you and for me! What a truth! I want to encourage you to do all you can to safely celebrate this Christmas even with the current limitations we have.

Our Wednesday night Zoom Bible study will be ending the "Conformed to His Image" book this month. This book has helped us explore important aspects of our walk with Christ. In January, we will be starting a new study. We will be studying the Gospel of John, using the "Life Application Bible Studies (NIV)". The study guide will include the text of the Book of John, application focused commentary, as well as engaging reflection questions.

Our Encounter Youth Ministry will continue with our Zoom and monthly in-person gatherings. We continue to monitor the pandemic and will inform everyone of any changes to our scheduled activities. This December, our youth gatherings will feature a new study series on hope. Each student will receive a copy of the study guide to take home.

Let us continue to seek the Lord together. May the Christmas Season fill our hearts with hope and peace.

**"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14, NIV)**

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Edwin

## *Merry Christmas, ENUMC*

## Happy Birthday

Dianne Akins	2-Dec	Verna Smith	15-Dec
Shirley Davis	2-Dec	Virginia Burroughs	19-Dec
Charles Huber	4-Dec	Marelys Delashmet	20-Dec
Nicolas Gonzalez	6-Dec	Joan Lewis	21-Dec
Charma Camp	7-Dec	Nancy Miller	21-Dec
Violet Tolj	8-Dec	Jean Tibbs	21-Dec
Richard Watson	8-Dec	Patsy Vaughn	21-Dec
Patricia Cortright	10-Dec	Orlando Ramirez	24-Dec
Lester Orris	12-Dec	Zurisadai (Zuri) Moxam	26-Dec
Anna Tea	12-Dec	Michael Poff	27-Dec
Javier Armenteros	13-Dec	Dana Reeves	27-Dec
Caroline Lightner	14-Dec	Victoria Poff	29-Dec
Mary Ann Palmer	14-Dec	Josue Legra Jr.	30-Dec

*May the grace and peace of the Lord be with you on your special day and every other day in this new year of your life.*



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## *Weekly Worship Service and Bible Study Schedule*

*Come Join Us, We Look Forward to Welcoming You!*

<i>Day &amp; Time</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>Sunday</b>		
9:30 a.m.	Worship Service	Sanctuary, Online
10:00 a.m.	Servicio en Español	Fellowship Hall
5:00- 6:00 p.m.	Youth Gathering	Gazebo
6:00 p.m.	Youth Group	Zoom
<b>Monday</b>		
10:00 a.m.	Joy Bible Study	Elsley Hall
<b>Tuesday</b>		
9:00 a.m.	Bargain Nook Open	Bargain Nook
<b>Wednesday</b>		
6:00 p.m.	Wednesday Night Bible Study	Zoom
7:30 p.m.	Estudio Biblico	Zoom
<b>Thursday</b>		
9:00 a.m.	Bargain Nook Open	Bargain Nook
7:30 p.m.	Grupos Pequeños	Elsley Hall