

DeBows Crows

The Monthly Newsletter of DeBows UMC



December 2015

DeBows UMC

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Celebrate the Season



Please visit the church website for information about special services and events scheduled in December. www.debowsunc.org

Prayer List



We Lift Up the Following People in Prayer

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Madhavi Badey | Bee O'Brian |
| Chris Bitondo | Debra Quinn |
| Tina Clark | Cindy Raymond |
| Karen Hornak | Dean Sparling |
| Rudy & Jean Iannacone | Elle Wornstaff |
| Family of Fred Weeks | Homeless Persons |
| Victims of Gun Violence & Terror Attacks | |

Community Event



DeBows UMC will present a Living Nativity on Saturday, December 12th at 5:00 and 6:00 PM. The presentation will feature live animals and music. Soup, cookies, and hot cider & chocolate will be served in Fellowship Hall. We welcome everyone to join us for this special event. Please consider volunteering to participate and support this event.

Bible Verse for Reflection

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

~ John 1:14 ~

A Word From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, we trust that the entire nation will engage in a sort of shared religious experience – simply being grateful. Most of us know some version of that first Thanksgiving celebrated by the Pilgrims. But aside from the fact of a meal, it does not have much in common with our celebration. Their Thanksgiving was centered on the joy that they had survived, that God had provided (with the assistance of Native Americans being a significant part of that providence). In the midst of suffering and death, of the very real threat that none of them would make it, God had seen them through.

But our version of Thanksgiving has become a celebration of abundance and excess. For most Americans the day is quite routinized. We generally overeat, catch a parade, watch some football, and get ready to shop. Many of us will offer thanks for all this abundance, **but too often we view this abundance as a result of our own industry** – an abundance produced by our own hard work and ingenuity. Too seldom is our thanksgiving about God providing our daily bread. Too often it is simply about having more.

Despite repeated warnings on the subject from Jesus and the Bible, we have become a nation obsessed with consumption and accumulation.

The message that spews non-stop from our televisions and other media is that happiness is about having more. And there is good reason to believe that true gratitude becomes more and more difficult the more we have. Wealth often breeds a sense of entitlement. And somewhat surprisingly, wealth often diminishes generosity. Perhaps that is what Jesus means when He tells us: *“How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”*

On Thanksgiving Day we will all feel a sense of genuine gratitude – even if in passing. It will be a good and gracious moment. But the Bible

seems to be asking for more from us. When the Scriptures talk about thanksgiving, it's more than a day, or a moment, or a feeling; it's a way of life. This is demonstrated well by Paul in Philippians. Paul is in almost unimaginably difficult circumstances, but it's still about thanksgiving for him. You can't tell it from these verses, but Paul is awaiting trial. He writes to the Philippians from death row in a prison. He's been on a tour of the Roman penal system. Paul knows he may be executed.

Paul's suffering was reason for complaint. If we were in his sandals, we would be feeling pretty down about life, and not too thrilled with God. Self-absorbed pity seems like a reasonable choice, **but from prison Paul writes in joy and about joy.** Listen to this translation from *The Message*:

Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! (Philippians 4:4)

Let me offer this axiom for life: it is not what we get that determines the quality of our lives; it's how we interpret what we get that counts. Life does not come to us directly; it is mediated through our points of view, our mind-sets, our assumptions. The attitude of thankfulness is recommended sixty-two times in the New Testament. **Thanksgiving is the door to a sacred life.** Gratitude alters our priorities and makes us live gratefully. Gratitude points our minds in God's direction and lifts us out of the fog of self-absorption. It broadens our perspective and strengthens our confidence in God's faithfulness. It enables us to rejoice, even when life is hard. Gratitude is the secret of hopeful people.

Let us rejoice in this: because of Jesus we can be thankful every day! Have a Blessed Thanksgiving.

Shalom!



Upcoming Events

2015 DECEMBER						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Food Pantry	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26
27	28 Food Pantry	29	30	31 New Year's Eve		

Tuesday, December 1
#GivingTuesday

Wednesday, December 2
Bible Study 11:30 AM

Sunday, December 6
Advent Bible Study 9:45 AM
2nd Sunday of Advent 11:00 AM
Worship Service &
Sunday School
Cantata Practice 12:30 PM

Wednesday, December 9
Bible Study 11:30 AM

Thursday, December 10
Wesley Club's 6:00 PM
Visit to Care One

Saturday, December 12
Living Nativity 5 & 6 PM

Sunday, December 13
Advent Bible Study 9:45 AM
3rd Sunday of Advent 11:00 AM
Worship Service &
Sunday School
Youth Group Meeting 12:30 PM

Monday, December 14
Food Pantry Open 6:30 PM

Wednesday, December 16
Admin Council Meeting 7:30 PM

Saturday, December 19
Contemporary Worship
Service 6:30 PM

Sunday, December 20
Advent Bible Study 9:45 AM
4th Sunday of Advent 11:00 AM
Worship Service &
Sunday School
Cantata Practice 12:30 PM

Thursday, December 24
Christmas Eve 5:30 &
Candlelight Services 7:00 PM

Friday, December 25
Christmas Day

Sunday, December 27
Bible Study 9:45 AM
Worship Service &
Sunday School 11:00 AM
Youth Group Meeting 12:30 PM

Monday, December 28
Food Pantry Open 6:30 PM

Thursday, December 31
New Year's Eve

Friday, January 1, 2016
New Year's Day

Sunday, January 3, 2016
Epiphany Sunday 11:00 AM

NOTE: Please visit www.debowsumc.org
for the most up-to-date schedule information.

Bible Study Opportunities

4 Week Church Wide Advent Bible Study
November 29, December 6, 13, 20 - 9:45 AM

Women's Bible Study - This group meets in Fellowship Hall. – Sunday's at 9:45 AM

Adult Bible Study - This group meets in the class room downstairs. – Sunday's at 9:45 AM

Fall Bible Study – This group meets on Wednesday's at 11:30 AM.

Please view the church calendar for the schedule of study topics. New class members are always welcome and can join at any time. Please join us as we study the Word of God.

Sunday Worship Schedule

Bible Study	9:45 – 10:45 AM
Worship Service	11:00 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Fellowship Time	After Worship Service

DeBows UMC Online

Visit DeBows UMC online at:

www.debowsumc.org

or

www.facebook.com/debowsumc

You can visit now on your smart phone
by scanning the below QR Codes.

DeBows Website



DeBows Facebook



On the website you can access the most up-to-date information concerning schedules, events and activities, as well as current blog posts and general information about the church.

Emails can be sent to church staff via the "Contact Us" page. **Alert notices, such as cancellations due to bad weather, will also be posted on the website as needed.** Visit often for the latest information.

You can also participate on #GivingTuesday (or anytime) as mentioned in last month's newsletter and the information currently found on the church website.

Black Friday. Cyber Monday.

#GIVINGTUESDAY

December 1, 2015

Inside the church you can connect to the WiFi service using the instructions found on the bulletin board outside Fellowship Hall.

The 12 Days of Christmas

American humorist Kin Hubbard (1868 – 1930) once observed “Next to a circus there ain’t nothing that packs up and tears out faster than the Christmas spirit.” Unfortunately many of us have witnessed this first hand. By the time Christmas Day arrives we are so tired and burned out that Christmas seems anti-climactic and devoid of much of the joy that is supposed to be associated with the season; Peace and Goodwill seem hard to find.

Part of the reason for this is society in general has bought into the modern secular marketing hype of the season and has lost sight of the relationship and observance of the traditional Christian liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.

The traditions of the Twelve Days of Christmas (Christmastide) have been largely forgotten in the United States. We seem to be much better at singing the song “*The Twelve Days of Christmas*” than observing the 12 days. Contributing factors include (but not limited to) the adoption of more secular traditions, such as the American version of Santa Claus, the rise in popularity of New Year's Eve parties, and perhaps most significant, the Christmas marketing strategies of store retailers. For retailers, the first day of Christmas (December 25th) represents the end of the marketing season, as demonstrated by the number of "after-Christmas sales" that launch on December 26. The commercial retail calendar has fostered a false sense that the Christmas season ends on December 25th, when in fact it is just beginning.

Perhaps a quick review of the Christian liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany will help us restore the joy and better appreciate the meaning of the season.

Advent

In the Western Christian church, Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year and begins on the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas Day, December 25th and ends on Christmas Eve (December 24th).

Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The word Advent comes from the Latin word adventus, meaning "coming".

The Latin word adventus is the translation of the Greek word parousia, which commonly is used to refer to the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore the season of Advent can anticipate the coming of Christ from two different perspectives. The season offers the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah as well as reminding us to stay alert for his Second Coming.

The Twelve Days of Christmas (Christmastide)

- *The Twelve Days of Christmas, or Christmastide, start on Christmas Day, December 25th and ends on January 5th*
- *The night of January 5th is called “Twelve Night”*
- *While there is no official set of rules to celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas, some common customs and activities include:*
 - *Some churches on each of the twelve days celebrate a different Christian Saint or event.*
 - *Some people exchange gifts and/or light a candle on each of the twelve days.*

- *Some people light a Yule Log on the first night (December 25th) and let it burn some each of the twelve nights.*
- *Some people visit friends and family during this time.*
- *Some people have parties on Twelve Night.*
- *Tradition suggests the Christmas tree and decorations should be taken down between Twelve Night and Epiphany morning.*

Epiphany

The word Epiphany is from the Greek word ἐπιφάνεια. Epiphaneia derives from the verb "to appear" and means "manifestation" or "appearance."

In the Methodist church Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th to commemorate the visit of the Magi (wise men) to see the Christ child. Many view this event as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

It is very hard not to get caught up in the commercial aspects of Christmas. But if we can better observe the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, we may find the Christmas spirit stays with us much longer.

We just need to remember that Christmas is not about material items and artificial, self-imposed deadlines, but rather Christmas is about rekindling our relationship with God through the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. If we celebrate the true glory of Christmas and share it with others, we just might find that ever elusive Peace and Goodwill; not just on Christmas Day, but throughout the year.

Some Christmas Trivia

Nativity Display

Many Christians display a Nativity scene during Advent and Christmas, but may not be aware that Saint Francis of Assisi is credited for creating the first nativity set for display in the 13th century.

The word "Xmas"

Christmas is a contraction of "Christ's Mass," which is derived from the Old English *Cristes mæsse* (first recorded in 1038). Many people see the word "Xmas" as an irreverent way to refer to Christmas, in that they believe the "X" removes Christ from Christmas. This is incorrect. The 'X' represents the Greek letter chi, which is the first letter of Christ's name in Greek (Χριστός). The word Xmas is every bit as religious as Christmas and has been used as an abbreviation for Christmas since the mid-1500s.

Santa Claus

The popular character of Santa Claus is based on an actual person; the early Church Bishop Saint Nicholas. He was born during the third century (around 270 AD), in the village of Patara in Turkey, and was known for secretly giving gifts of money to the poor. The name Santa Claus originated from the Dutch word *Sinterklaas* which means Saint Nicholas. Some Christmas songs acknowledge this fact, such as the song *Jolly Old Saint Nicholas*.

Candy Canes



There are several conflicting and suspect accounts of how the traditional candy cane was created to incorporate symbols of Christ's love and sacrifice and how it became a common item associated with Christmas. While we may not know the specifics of its origin, here is a composite explanation of the candy cane's Christian symbolism.

First, it starts as a plain white peppermint stick. The color white symbolizes the purity and sinless nature of Jesus. Next, red stripes were added to symbolize the pain inflicted upon Jesus before His death on the cross: three thin red strips represent the Holy Trinity and a bolder red stripe represents the blood Jesus shed for mankind. When looked at with the crook on top, it looks like a shepherd's staff because Jesus is the shepherd of man. If you turn it upside down, it becomes the letter J symbolizing the first letter in Jesus' name.

While the details about the origin and purpose of the candy cane are vague, when viewed in this light, it becomes easier to understand candy canes in the context of Christmas.

Gifts of the Twelve Day of Christmas

If you do the math, the total number of gifts mentioned in the song *The Twelve Days of Christmas* would equal 364 gifts. Thus enough gifts to exchange every day of the year. What a concept: sharing the Christmas spirit all year long. This is reflective of a quote from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* -- "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."

The word "Noel"

The word Noel is used in place of Christmas in France. The word was derived from the French phrase "les bonnes nouvelles" which means "the good news" and it refers to the Gospel.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day was officially declared a federal holiday in the United States in 1870.

Christmas Cards

The first commercial Christmas card was produced and sold in London in 1843. Commissioned by Sir Henry Cole (1808-1883), and designed by British illustrator John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903) they produced the below Christmas card.



It can be noted that 1843 was the same year Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" was written and the side panels of the card temper the celebration seen in the center with acts of benevolence.

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

The most famous of Santa's reindeer came to life as part of a commercial promotion. He was first mentioned in a story written in 1939 by ad copywriter Robert L. May that was published in a Montgomery Ward department store promotional booklet given out to children visiting Santa. Rudolph's legend grew when May set the story to music with the help of his songwriter brother-in-law Johnny Marks. It was famously recorded by Gene Autry and became one of the best-selling Christmas songs of all time.

Jingle Bells

The song *Jingle Bells* was actually first written for the Thanksgiving holiday, but gained immense popularity as a song associated with the celebration of Christmas.

Christmas Stamps

In 1962, the first Christmas postage stamp was issued in the United States; they cost 4 cent each!



Community Ministry

FOOD PANTRY

2ND & 4TH MONDAY
EACH MONTH AT 6:30 PM

A Ministry of DeBows UMC



For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me . . . Matthew 25:35

The DeBows Community Food Pantry continues to be one of the most visible and effective ministries of the church. There was 126 participants in the month of October. This was above the average served per month of 113 as we had 5 new families sign up for assistance.

We received 90 pounds of donated food, bought 550 pounds of food and received 282 pounds of free food from governmental programs.

Thank you to everyone who supports the food pantry through monetary and food donations, handling delivery and stocking shelves and distributing food when the food pantry is open. It is only through your generosity and help that the food pantry can continue to serve those in need in our community.

Those we serve are not only thankful of the food provided but welcome the love and care they are shown by members of the congregation.

All of those being served are struggling through some type of financial hardship and many have additional trials in their lives. So please keep the food pantry program and all who benefit from the program in your prayers.

Our Food Pantry ministry was blessed and thankful to receive the offering from the Community Thanksgiving Service held at Hope Cathedral in Jackson on November 22nd.

A Christmas Poem

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

By Helen Steiner Rice

It happened one day near December's end,
Two neighbors called on an old-time friend
And they found his shop so meager and mean,
Made gay with a thousand boughs of green,
And Conrad was sitting with face a-shine
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched a twine
And he said, "Old friends, at dawn today,
When the cock was crowing the night away,
The Lord appeared in a dream to me
And said, 'I am coming your guest to be'.
So I've been busy with feet astir,
Strewing my shop with branches of fir,
The table is spread and the kettle is shined
And over the rafters the holly is twined,
And now I will wait for my Lord to appear
And listen closely so I will hear
His step as He nears my humble place,
And I open the door and look on His face. . ."

So his friends went home and left Conrad alone,
For this was the happiest day he had known,
For, long since, his family had passed away
And Conrad had spent many a sad Christmas Day.
But he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest
This Christmas would be the dearest and best,
So he listened with only joy in his heart.
And with every sound he would rise with a start
And look for the Lord to be at his door
Like the vision he had a few hours before.
So he ran to the window after hearing a sound,
But all that he could see on the snow-covered
ground
Was a shabby beggar whose shoes were torn
And all of his clothes were ragged and worn.
But Conrad was touched and went to the door
And he said, "Your feet must be frozen and sore,
I have some shoes in my shop for you
And a coat that will keep you warmer, too."

So with grateful heart the man went away,
But Conrad noticed the time of day.
He wondered what made the Lord so late

And how much longer he'd have to wait,
When he heard a knock and ran to the door,
But it was only a stranger once more.
A bent, old lady with a shawl of black,
With a bundle of kindling piled on her back.
She asked for only a place to rest,
But that was reserved for Conrad's Great Guest.
But her voice seemed to plead, "Don't send me
away
Let me rest for awhile on Christmas day."
So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup
And told her to sit at the table and sup.
But after she left he was filled with dismay
For he saw that the hours were slipping away
And the Lord had not come as He said He would,
And Conrad felt sure he had misunderstood.

When out of the stillness he heard a cry,
"Please help me and tell me where am I."
So again he opened his friendly door
And stood disappointed as twice before,
It was only a child who had wandered away
And was lost from her family on Christmas Day.
Again Conrad's heart was heavy and sad,
But he knew he should make the little girl glad,
So he called her in and wiped her tears
And quieted all her childish fears.
Then he led her back to her home once more
But as he entered his own darkened door,
He knew that the Lord was not coming today
For the hours of Christmas had passed away.
So he went to his room and knelt down to pray
And he said, "Dear Lord, why did you delay,
What kept You from coming to call on me,
For I wanted so much Your face to see. . ."

When soft in the silence a voice he heard,
"Lift up your head for I kept My word--
Three times My shadow crossed your floor--
Three times I came to your lowly door--
For I was the beggar with bruised, cold feet,
I was the woman you gave something to eat,
And I was the child on the homeless street.
Three times I knocked and three times I came in,
And each time I found the warmth of a friend.
Of all the gifts, love is the best,
I was honored to be your Christmas guest."

Did You Know?

- ✓ The gifts for the The Children's Home Society of New Jersey Gift Wish List program are due back no later than Sunday, December 6th. Please place the gifts in a bag, unwrapped. Thank you for your participation in this community outreach.
- ✓ There will be two Christmas Eve Candlelight services this year. They will be at 5:30 & 7:00 PM respectively.
- ✓ Charlie Zalm will be at First Baptist Church in Allentown on Saturday, December 12th at 1:30 PM. He will be performing a free Celtic Christmas Concert.
- ✓ Starting with the July 2015 issue, past issues of the DeBows UMC monthly newsletter can be downloaded and viewed from the church website under the News & Media menu item.
- ✓ You may provide feedback and/or submit suggestions for possible future newsletter content by visiting the Contact page on the church website. Select "Newsletter Content" from the recipient pull down list and compose/send the email. Also, if you now receive the newsletter via postal mail and now have a valid email address, please let us know. This will help us control our postage cost.
- ✓ The Wesley Club will visit Care One on Thursday, December 10th. They will sing Christmas carols and distribute Prayer Shawls and stuffed animals. If you intend to donate a Prayer Shawl or a stuffed animal, please bring it to the church by Sunday, December 6th. You may contact Donna Ridge for more information.

Nativity Word Search



Find 12 words associated with the Nativity Story. Up, down, diagonally, forward or backwards. All words are in a straight line.

Jesus	Mary	Joseph	Manger
Star	Angel	Virgin	Bethlehem
Birth	Shepherds	Lord	Glory

J	B	B	I	R	T	H	T	S
F	J	E	S	U	S	B	P	V
Y	N	C	X	S	H	E	L	I
Q	M	M	W	T	M	T	K	R
J	A	G	A	A	G	H	D	G
D	N	R	J	R	M	L	R	I
F	G	L	O	R	Y	E	O	N
B	E	W	S	T	I	H	L	R
D	R	A	E	H	P	E	U	O
P	S	T	P	N	Y	M	L	K
C	G	G	H	A	N	G	E	L
S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S

*Best wishes for a season filled with
Hope ~ Peace ~ Joy ~ Love*