

# Message from Pastor Dean

## The First Gift

One of my favorite Christmas movies is called “The Christmas Box”, starring Richard Thomas and Maureen O’Hara. In the story, a ski-shop owner and his wife and daughter move in with an elderly widow who needs help. As the ski-shop owner struggles to get along with the old woman, who perplexes him with a riddle, “What is the first gift of Christmas?” He struggles for some time before the answer finally dawns on him. The first gift of Christmas was a child. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) This is the message of Christmas, God so loved us that He gave, and he gave us His very best, and with the Son, comes the gift of life, everlasting life.

There is a peculiar thing about gifts, to do us any good, we have to receive them. This gift doesn’t come in fancy wrappings, all tied up with a bow, but must rather be received by faith. As you celebrate this season, don’t forget what it is really about, and put your faith in the one has given you every good gift you have ever received, Jesus Christ, the Son.

As this season begins, I want to take a moment to say, “thank you” to all of you. You have welcomed us into your church, and into your hearts, and we are happy to take our place among the people of Grace. I know that God is going to take care of us all, that the apportionments will be paid in full, and that the new year will bring many adventures, in store for us, as we follow the direction that the Lord has in mind. Thank you for your generosity to us and to the church. You truly are the “people of Grace”.

## Prayer & Praise Sisters

You are welcome to join the Prayer & Praise Sisters each Wednesday morning in their fun activities:

December 3 – meet at Grace UMC at 8:15 a.m. Louise Weber will provide treat and the devotion.

December 10 – meet at Grace UMC at 8:15 a.m. to carpool to breakfast at Village Inn then go to Dodge House in Council Bluffs.

December 17 – Christmas Party at Verna Kelley’s house at 8:15 a.m. Bring a gift to exchange for \$10 or under.

December 24 – No meeting

December 31 – meet at Grace UMC at 8:15 a.m. Vera Tackett will provide treat and devotion

January 7 – meet at Grace UMC at 8:15 a.m. June Hostetter will provide treat and devotion.

If you have questions call Louise Weber.

## MOPS Meetings

MOPS will have their Christmas party at Tara Baker’s house Wednesday, December 10 at 6:30 p.m. Bring an appetizer or dessert, \$5.00 Christmas ornament, and a can food item for the food pantry. You can contact Tara for directions to her home by emailing her.

On Wednesday, January 14 at 6:30 p.m. MOPS will meet in Fellowship Hall.

Join other mothers at a MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) meeting! For more information about MOPS contact Monica Mayberry or Amber Dyer. MOPS have a website. Check it out at

[www.freewebs.com/mopsofgrace](http://www.freewebs.com/mopsofgrace).

## Christmas Cards are Welcome

The bulletin board by the church office has space for you to post a Christmas card/message to your friends at Grace UMC. We'd like to hear from you. You may send a card to the church for the secretary to post or bring one to worship with you and put it up yourself.

## Soup and Song

The Mills County Ministerial Association will be presenting Soup & Song on Sunday, December 7, 2008 at Holy Rosary Church in Glenwood. The event runs from 5 to 7 P.M. Join us for a great evening of fellowship and entertainment by our local musicians, including the Bells of Grace and the Grace Notes from GUMC.

All donations from the evening will be used for Utility Assistance. Tickets are available at the door or in the church office. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will provide matching funds for this event.

## New Beth Moore Bible Study

Beginning on January 5, 2009 Calvary Baptist Church in Glenwood is hosting the new Beth Moore Bible Study entitled "Esther". The study will be held at 9:30 A.M. and at 6:30 P.M.

Grace U.M.C. will be hosting a study on "Daniel" by Beth Moore when the "Esther" study ends. For more information, contact Jean McInerney.

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## December & January Committee Meetings

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December 17	Education	6:30 p.m.
December ?	Finance	7:30 p.m.
December 10	MOPS	6:30 p.m.
December ?	Church Council	7:30 p.m.
January 7	Missions	6:30 p.m.
January 7	Trustees	7:30 p.m.
January 14	MOPS	6:30 p.m.
January 14	Church Council	7:30 p.m.
January 21	S.S. Teachers	6:00 p.m.
January 21	Nurture & Ed.	6:30 p.m.

## Walk to Emmaus

There is another "Walk to Emmaus" scheduled at Corning U.M.C. in Corning IA. The Men's walk is set for February 19 through February 22, 2009. The Women's walk is set for February 26 through March 1, 2009. Anyone interested in attending, or if there is a Walk to Emmaus member, who would like to sponsor someone, please contact Pastor Dean McPherson or call 527-4607.

# Advent Festival

Wednesday, December 10

from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

At Grace United Methodist Church

For children 2 years old – 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Children can make crafts, decorate cookies, shop for their family, visit the Nativity and hear the Christmas Story. A child's gift may be brought that will be given to Love Tree.

Adults can socialize in the tea room while their child shops. Parents are encouraged to assist their small children with the crafts.

## **Plan to join in the Fun!**

### **Opportunities to Help with Advent Festival**

Items that are new or like-new are needed for the Children's Store for the children to purchase at the Advent Festival. No item is sold for more than \$3.00. Boxes are in the hallway for donations.

Volunteers are needed to work at the Advent Festival. Would you help with crafts, the nativity, children's store, setting up or taking down the event? Please call Carol Hurst 527-9925 if you have questions or to volunteer.

### **Malaria Kills – \$10 Can Save Lives**

Every \$10 donation to *Nothing But Nets* goes directly toward the purchase, distribution and education about the proper use of a long-lasting insecticide-treated bed net. Bed nets work in two ways: They stop mosquitoes from biting and spreading disease and the insecticide on the net kills the mosquitoes when they land on it.

The people of the United Methodist Church have partnered with *Nothing But Nets* to provide nets throughout Africa. Grace UMC will receive donations throughout December for bed nets. Make checks to Grace UMC and put "nets" on the memo line.

### **2008 Contribution Deadline**

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to Grace United Methodist Church for calendar tax year 2008 must by December 31, 2008. Checks received after December 31 (regardless of the date on the check) will be posted to 2009.

### **Human Relations Day Offering**

The United Methodist church will observe Human Relations Day on Sunday January 18, 2009.

When you give generously on Human Relations Day, you support a network of grassroots social-service organizations and offer youth offenders a second chance. United Methodist congregations also open doors for church-based community developers to work in racial- and ethnic-minority communities in the United States and Puerto Rico. Please give generously. Your gifts do make a difference.

## Send a Card to Recovering Soldiers

When you are making out your Christmas card list this year, please include a card to the following address:

A Recovering American Soldier  
c/o Walter Reed Army medical Center  
6900 Georgia Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20307-5001

## Blanket and Ingathering Update

The Mission Committee says "THANK YOU" for the wonderful response to the Thanksgiving Ingathering and Blanket Fund Drive. Grace United Methodist church remittance form showed all these donations:

Church World Service Blankets	\$1,098
Heifer Project donation	\$ 150
Self-Help International Feeding Program	\$ 150
P.E.T. (Personal Energy Transportation)	\$ 250
Money for Shipping, Supplies, and Seeds	\$ 366
27 Health Kits @ \$12 each	\$ 324
26 Sewing Kits @ \$18 each	\$ 468
34 School Kits @ \$11 each	\$ 374
20 Layette Kits for UMCOR @ \$35 each	\$ 700
6 Layette Kits for INP @ \$20 each	\$ 120
4 Knitting Kits @ \$12 each	\$ 48
	\$4,018

Thank you to Jeff Mitts (Blanket Man) and Blanket Man's assistants for promoting Church World Service Blankets + Program.

Thank you to Patti Cahanding, Mariya Nikserest and Sadie Wood for attending Ingathering and working very hard to prepare the kits for shipping.

## Join United Methodist Women

**Dec. 4** – UMW Christmas Potluck lunch and meeting is Thursday, December 4 at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. Barbara Tucker will provide the worship center and devotion. A choir from the Middle School will present the program. Special guests are a representative from the Open Door Mission and Debbie Schmidt with Operation Bedtime Stories. Hostesses are Betty Boles, Betty Lou Palmer and Louise Haack.

**Dec. 8** – Faith Circle will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Church Lounge. Wilma Kelly will provide the devotion and program. The refreshments are "Salad Surprise" provided by each member. If you have questions contact June McMahill 527-4777.

**Dec. 11** – The Hope Circle Christmas Party will be held Thursday December 11<sup>th</sup> at 6 P.M. at Kathy Bird's. There will be a gift exchange with a \$10 limit. It is a potluck, so bring your favorite Christmas food item. We will meet at the church for those interested in carpooling at 5:45 P.M.

**Watch Sunday bulletins for January meeting news!**

## **Let's think "Christmas Program"!**

This year's Christmas Program will be "The Not So Silent Night!" The program will be on Sunday, December 14 @ 6:30 p.m.

Our directors are Cindy Wood and Julie Godbout. Practice dates and times are Saturdays, December 6 & 13 at noon. Practices will be held in the Jr. High room.

## **July in January – Come celebrate a Patriotic Sunday with Us!**

- On January 25 the Sunday School classes will be hosting a July in January "Hotdog Roast" following the 10:30 worship service
- The Joy Choir will lead us in singing, "God Bless America" during our meal as we thank God for the freedoms that we enjoy and ask Him for His blessings on our country and service people.
- Please... support our children by attending
- A freewill offering will be accepted with proceeds to help support the needs of the Sunday School wing.

## **What's Happening in our Small Group Ministries?**

**The Joy Choir** will sing on January 25<sup>th</sup> during the July in January hot dog roast in the Fellowship Hall. The event will follow the 10:30 worship service.

### **The Harmony Hands Bell Choir:**

This group of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> graders meet and practice the bells during Sunday school class time. They have been practicing a few songs and will be performing in church soon! What a big excited group!

### **Jesus' Shinning Stars**

A Mid-week program just for kids in the Pre-K through the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is meeting right after school on Wednesdays. During our time together we work with play dough while listening to our Bible story. We also play games, sing songs and do crafts during our hour together!

Roxanne Boverhuis is leading this group with the help of Sally Vohs, Angela Griffin and Stephanie Todd.

**The Sonshine Choir** sings during the early service on December 14 (**Unless notified**).

### **The Grace Notes**

WOW! We have a huge group of GREAT players!! They are working hard and sounding FANTASTIC! The Grace Notes will be playing at SOUP & SONG on December 7<sup>th</sup> (5-7 p.m.) at the Holy Rosary Church. They are excited to be a part of this community outreach event that helps those in our community in emergency situations with their utility bills. Please come, enjoy and be a part of this effort!

**God's Kids** will meet at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 3 to go Christmas Caroling at Linnwood Estates and Glen Haven. They will meet again on January 7<sup>th</sup> at their regular time. Info on that meeting will be made available closer to that time.

**Wednesday After School Groups** will not meet on December 10 as they are encouraged to participate in the Advent Festival. Because of the Christmas holidays, they will not meet on December 24<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup>. Also, if school is let out because of weather there won't be After School Groups.

## **Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group Meetings**

The December Youth Group meetings will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays.

## **What's Happening in Sunday School?**

**Throughout the Christmas and New Year's season our Sunday School classes will be applying Biblical learning through stories, games and (in some classes!) crafts.**

**The 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade (The Holy Bees!)** have been learning about Abraham and Sarah, their family and their being faithful to God.

The Bee's have been buzzing out of their hive and are on their way to having a Bible Verse Party very soon! The Holy Bee's need help from their friends, so come and see what's next!

**The Jr. High Class** has been challenging themselves while playing 'Jeopardy!' Be prepared to travel the road to Jerusalem and also learn about Epiphany in December & January's version of Jeopardy!

**The Sr. High Class** has been connecting their daily lives to the Bible through a game called, "Cardversations". This game is cause for understanding and reflection. You won't want to miss a class!

**We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**