



AVENUE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## *The Midweek*

*Wednesday, January 18 2017*

*From the desk of our Pastors . . .*

Pastor Tom and I disagree about the Oxford comma. If you are not familiar with that term, it's the comma that occasionally appears in sentences that have a list of more than three items and is placed right before the "and." For example, there is an Oxford comma in "peanut butter, jelly, and bread." Tom is for it. I am against it. (Please feel free to weigh in with your preferences in my office. I'll be putting a "yes Oxford comma" and a "no Oxford comma" sheet on my door and in a week we will see which option is preferred in Avenue Church.)

It is not that I have a gripe with commas. I think commas are critical to good grammar. It changes the meaning of sentences depending on where you put them but the Oxford comma, to me, is unnecessary. Tom disagrees.

It seems a silly thing to debate but Tom grew up using the APA style guide and I was trained using AP style. I believe we would both say we are entrenched in our opinions. However, we don't let it affect our working relationship or the work we do on behalf of Jesus and His church on earth.

Sometimes in our lives it seems that the smallest things turn into the biggest battles. People take stands based on principles, tradition, or simple stubbornness and will not consider an alternate or opposite opinion. What one person considers to be irrelevant can be the very thing that someone else thinks is major. Loading the dishwasher. The way the toilet paper rolls. How much cheese goes on pizza. There are many other examples I am sure you can cite.

It's important to have strong beliefs and hold them closely. As Christians, we believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus to bring us to the kingdom eternal. We look to share that good news with people who don't know the grace and mercy of God so that we can give them hope and peace. We look to bring people to Christ through our witness and by being good examples of Christ's love and mercy in this world. As someone in seminary once told me, some people are so lost and in need of hope that I need to do more than preach a

message. I need to be the message.

Notice the words however. “Bring” and “share” and “give” are the ways that we make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. We don’t force or direct or demand that people turn to Christianity. We gently guide them to the truth and the way.

As we move into the new normal of the Trump presidency there will be times and issues that will cause us to be happy or upset, mad or glad. It is important however that we listen to all sides of a debate and give folks with different opinions the respect and acknowledgment of their position, just as it’s important they do the same with us.

It is very likely that change is about to come to this nation. I can’t predict or speculate what it will be or how it will affect us collectively or individually. Nobody can because only God knows what is to be. But even if we disagree politically we need to remember that we are in this together as children of God.

Romans 14:1 says “As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.”

Let us remember that we are told to love one and another. By adhering to that commandment, we can bring honor and glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

(And you are right...there is no Oxford comma in that sentence.)



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**REMINDER: UPCOMING HAPPENINGS IN**  
**FELLOWSHIP HALL**

**Baby Shower for Cliff & Erin McCall**  
**Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 10:30a.m. -**  
**1:00p.m.**

**Code Purple Volunteer Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3:00 p.m.**

**Church Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.**



*From the desk of our Conference Director Vicki. . .*

### #Pen-DelUnity

Many years ago, while serving in Newport, Rhode Island in the Navy, Bo and I joined Calvary UMC and served as High School Youth leaders. One January on Martin Luther King Day, we lingered at breakfast since we did not have to go to work. Bo opened the newspaper and saw that our church was hosting a celebration and luncheon. But, much to our surprise, the paper listed us as providing the special music! Somehow, that detail had slipped through the cracks and no one had actually invited us to sing. But, like the good sailors we were, we got dressed and headed to the church in time to sing. We chose “His Eye Is on the Sparrow,” not only because of its history as a Spiritual, but also because we sing our version *a capella* and would require no accompaniment.

At the luncheon following the worship, an older woman approached us with a melancholy smile. She introduced herself and told us that she came today to hear us sing. We had never met her before, so we invited her to tell us more. She explained that her last name was “Stith” and that she had never met any extended family. So she had hoped we were family. An awkward silence followed just for a moment as we all let the reality sink into our hearts. She was an African American woman, which meant that some Stith’s in the past had owned or fathered slave children from which this woman descended.

Instead of leaving us stuck there in that place of disorientation and guilt, the woman threw open her arms and hugged us. “We ARE family!” she exclaimed; “The best kind of family!” I remember how my heart just melted at that embrace and comment. This wonderful woman of grace transformed a moment of potential hostility into an opportunity for reconciliation. She reminded us all of that passage from Galatians 3:28: “In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.” (The Message.)

Fast forward twenty-six years later to an exhibit in the newly opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. I had traveled there this past November with the Directors of Connectional Ministry from the North East Jurisdiction. In one of the first exhibit halls, a picture of a slave block in Savannah captured my attention. Bo and I had taken our kids to a plantation in Charleston and learned there that 60% of the slaves entering the US by way of the Transatlantic Slave Trade came through Charleston, with as much as 40% going through Savannah for sale. My heart broke as I came to terms

once again with how very cruel we human beings can be to one another. The museum laid bare the terrible violence that African American people have endured and continue to endure.

As I stood there in silence, I heard a woman behind me quietly weeping. I turned to face her and she said to me: “Recently, I found out that our family came from Savannah. In researching some ancestry, I came across a family who shared our last name. They descended from the same great grandfather; however, they came directly in line from the slave owner and we descended from the slave owner’s rape of one of his slaves. I reached out to this family and they refused to recognize that we are kin.” I looked this young African American woman in the eye and saw the depth of her pain. Somewhere in the deep of my subconscious, I must have remembered the words of that elderly woman to Bo and me long ago, because without thinking, I responded: “I would claim you as family. In fact, you are my sister.” She, like the woman long ago, threw her arms open and embraced me, a stranger whom Christ had made family.

As we conclude our celebration of MLK day this year, I hold these two memories in my prayer, listening for God’s invitation to me and to us today. These questions arise: How can I continue to initiate and nurture relationships with people from different cultures than my own? What steps can we take, as individuals and as churches, to live out Paul’s vision of being one in Christ, regardless of anything that divides us? Where do we still see racial injustice and how is God calling us to work toward healing those breaches? How will you and your church remember Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s work for racial justice?

Blessings on the journey,

***Vicki***

Rev. Dr. Vicki Gordy-Stith

Director of Connection Ministries



**If you have never been Baptized, this is your chance!!** We will be baptizing anyone who has not been baptized, and wants to be, **this Sunday at all three services.** If you have experienced the sacrament of Baptism, then we will be remembering what God has done for us through His gift of grace. Come join us for worship on Sunday!!!



# Eternal Gifts Update

Just after I sent out the totals for the *Eternal Gifts* giving campaign, we received several additional pledge cards. I am pleased to report that, with the additional cards included, you all have committed to sharing \$336,174 of the gifts that you have received from God with Avenue Church. To put this number in context, it is a 6.7% increase of over last year when we accumulated pledges of almost \$315,000. Considering our pledges have historically totaled about 60% of our total gifts, it looks like we will be in good shape to meet next year's budget. Friends, this is an awesome witness to the generosity and the commitment of our members. You have promised to help continue the long tradition of the ministry of Jesus Christ here in this place. As we enter into 2017, may God bless all that Avenue UMC is involved in and sharing with the community.

Pastor Tony

EXPERIENCING  
**GOD**  
KNOWING AND DOING THE WILL OF GOD

***Starting January 25, 2017***

***Dinner at 6:00pm and Study at 7:00pm***

***at the home of Poncho and Lisa Johnson***

***Led by Donny Hopkins***

# SPIRIT NIGHT

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for avenue preschool

January 24, 2017 • 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Come out and support your school during Spirit Night! There will be friends, fun, and Chick-fil-A chicken! Please give this flyer to your cashier to ensure Avenue Preschool earns credit for your patronage.



Chick-fil-A Milford Plaza  
(302) 422-8825  
698 N Dupont Blvd # C  
[www.chick-fil-a.com/MilfordPlaza](http://www.chick-fil-a.com/MilfordPlaza)  
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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**HOSPITAL VISITS:** Please help the pastors by calling the church office at (302) 422-8111 when someone from the church is hospitalized.

**ELECTRONIC GIVING** is being offered at Avenue Church. An *Information Sheet with Authorization Agreement* is available on the table in Fellowship Foyer. Simply fill out the authorization agreement and return it to the church office.

**ALTAR FLOWERS:** If you want to reserve a Sunday please call the church office then call Country Flowers. Flowers are placed in the altar vases up by the cross.

### **PRAYER CONCERNS PAST WEEK:**

**Recently hospitalized:**

**Rejoice with:**

**PRAYER CONCERNS CURRENT WEEK:** The family and friends of James Eisenbrey, the family and friends of Alan Boltz, Sue Winkler, Brenda Powers and her mission team, Jim Greenley, Alan, Leslie Wuenstsel, Rachel, Ed, Bill Gaskill and family, the Hobbs family, God's beloved children, Brett Venable, Dave Dawson, Mike, the family of Joe Sykes, April McIntyre, Bill and Jill Gustin, Barbara Vederose, Colleen Dunham, Christopher, Kathryn Barnes, Olivia Davis and everyone traveling this week.

**Recently hospitalized:** Carolyn Williams and Skip Venable.

**Rejoice with:** Carolyn Wright, all blessed by God's grace and mercy, and Chip and Gabbie McKinney.

### **WEEKLY MUSIC REHEARSALS:**

#### **♪Handbells**

Mondays at 6:30 p.m., Sanctuary

#### **♪MomentUM Praise Team**

Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m., Sanctuary

#### **♪Mispillion Children's Chorus**

Tuesdays at 6:15 p.m., Music Room

#### **♪Praise Team**

Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary

#### **♪Sanctuary Choir**

Wednesdays at 3:00 p.m., Music Room

#### **♪AveNotes**

Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m., Sanctuary

Do you like to sing? Do you play an instrument? If you are interested in using your musical gifts here at Avenue Church please contact Kevin Chamberlain, kbchamberlain@avenueumc.com or (302) 236-1276.

## UPCOMING

On **Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>** we will be having a baby shower for Cliff and Erin McCall. It will be held in the Fellowship Hall from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

## SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITIES/MINISTRIES

**TUESDAY MORNING SISTERS' BIBLE STUDY:** We will continue our study "John" on **January 24<sup>th</sup>**. Please call Ginny Van Tine (302) 422-4282, Brenda Powers (302) 422-8821 or leave a message in the church office if you would like to join us. We meet at 10:00 a.m. in the Grier Room.

**WIDOW/WIDOWERS/LOST AND FOUND GROUP** will meet on **February 1<sup>st</sup>** at 2:00 p.m. in the **Heritage Room**. Come join us. Contact Janice Abbott at (302) 422-1863.

**ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP:** The Alzheimer's Caregiver's Support Group will meet the **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month**. The next meeting will be **February 13<sup>th</sup>** at 4:00 p.m. in the Grier Room.

**EXPLORING FAITH BOOK CLUB** meets on the third Sunday of the Month at 12:15 in the Grier Room. Our next study is **February 19, 2017**. The Book is "The Will of God" by Leslie Weatherhead. When bad things happen to good people, is this the will of God? If it is not, what is the will of God? If these questions have sparked an interest in you, then plan to come and "explore your faith" as these questions and others pertaining to God's Will are discussed.

## OUTREACH

**THE MILFORD COMMUNITY PANTRY:** As the new year begins we want to express our gratitude to all of you for the support you give **The Milford Community Pantry**. We had a busy year in 2016 and expect that need to continue this year. If you want to bring food to the Pantry we suggest peanut butter or jelly. If you would like to volunteer call Tita Lewis (302) 664-1321.

**AVENUE PRESCHOOL** has a limited number of openings for the 2016-17 school year. To be eligible, a child must be at least 36-months old on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. We are a Star Level 5, Delaware Stars rated program offering a high quality early education experience. For more information contact [office@avenuepreschool.org](mailto:office@avenuepreschool.org) or (302) 422-8111. Be sure to visit our Facebook page and website at: [www.avenuepreschool.org](http://www.avenuepreschool.org).

**LIFE LINE SCREENING:** Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings, is please to offer a preventive health event at Avenue United Methodist Church on **March 24, 2017**. Five screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to: blocked arteries which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries in the legs which is a strong predictor of heart disease; atrial fibrillation or irregular heart beat which is closely tied to stroke risk; and a bone density screening, for men and women, used to assess the risk of osteoporosis. Register for a Wellness Package which includes 4 vascular tests and osteoporosis



screening from \$149 (\$139 with our member discount). All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. **In order to register for this event and to receive a \$10 discount off any package priced above \$129, please call [1-888-653-6441](tel:1-888-653-6441) or visit [www.lifelinescreening.com/advantagemembers](http://www.lifelinescreening.com/advantagemembers).**

### **LAST WEEK AT AVENUE**

Attendance:	2016	2017
8:00	61	53
9:30	209	162
Sunday School	97	70
11:00	89	73
Thursday Service	0	6
FUSION	0	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>345</b>

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*You're Invited to a*



*Cliff & Erin McCall*

*January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 10:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.*

*Fellowship Hall*

# CALENDAR

## SUNDAY 1/22

8:00 a.m. Traditional Worship  
 8:30 a.m. McCall Baby Shower, Fellowship Hall  
 9:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
 9:30 a.m. Sunday School  
 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship  
 3:00 p.m. Code Purple Volunteer Meeting, Fellowship Hall  
 3:00 p.m. Music School of DE—Recital, Sanctuary  
 5:00 p.m. FUSION, Wesley Room & Fellowship Hall

## MONDAY 1/23

11:00 a.m. AA, Wesley Room  
 6:00 p.m. Pack Comm. Meeting, Fellowship Hall  
 6:30 p.m. Handbell Choir, Sanctuary  
 7:00 p.m. First State Harmonizers, Music Room  
 7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts, Fellowship Hall  
 8:00 p.m. AA, Room 206

## TUESDAY 1/24

10:00 a.m. Sisters Bible Study, Grier Room  
 6:00 p.m. Brownie Troop, Nursery  
 6:00 p.m. MomentUM Praise Team Rehearsal, Wesley Room  
 6:00 p.m. Covenant Discipleship Group, Wendy's Office  
 6:15 p.m. Mispillion Children's Choir, Music Room  
 6:30 p.m. Pack 186 Meeting, Fellowship Hall  
 7:00 p.m. Central Delaware Chess Club, Room 206  
 7:00 p.m. Praise Team Rehearsal, Sanctuary

## WEDNESDAY 1/25

10:30 a.m. Writing Group, Grier Room  
 1:30 p.m. Knitting Group, Grier Room  
 3:00 p.m. Sanctuary Choir, Sanctuary and Music Room  
 5:00 p.m. Instrumental Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
 5:00 p.m. Women's Emmaus Reunion, Room 202  
 6:00 p.m. AveNotes, Music Room  
 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting, Fellowship Hall

## THURSDAY 1/26

11:00 a.m. AA, Wesley Room  
 2:30 p.m. Women's Emmaus Reunion, Room 202  
 6:30 p.m. New Worship Service, Fellowship Hall

## FRIDAY 1/27

5:00 p.m. Scouts—Pinewood Derby, Fellowship Hall & Wesley Room  
 8:00 p.m. AA, Wesley Room

## SATURDAY 1/28

8:00 a.m. Scouts—Pinewood Derby, Fellowship Hall & Wesley Room  
 7:00 p.m. AA, Wesley Room

## SUNDAY 1/29

8:00 a.m. Traditional Worship  
 9:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
 9:30 a.m. Sunday School  
 10:45 a.m. Confirmation Class, Grier Room  
 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship  
 5:00 p.m. FUSION, Wesley Room & Fellowship Hall

**“A Dynamic Faith Community Growing in**