



AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Midweek

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

The Meaning of Christmas

Life offers many questions. When it comes to curiosity in the physical world, we turn to science for answers. When we think about *life's big questions*, we turn to philosophy. Religion seeks to answer spiritual questions that impact this life. Faith, in our case Christianity, offers answers to the meaning of life, the problem of sin and evil, and reveals that there is hope beyond this world through Jesus.

A.W. Tozer, an American Pastor, and Theologian writes

"It does seem strange that so many persons become excited about Christmas and so few stop to inquire into its meaning, but I suppose this odd phenomenon is quite in harmony with our unfortunate human habit of magnifying trivialities and ignoring matters of great import. The same man who will check his tires and consult his road map with utmost care before starting on a journey may travel for a lifetime on the way that knows no return and never once pauses to ask whether or not he is headed in the right direction."

I think that Tozer brings up a great point. How much time do we spend discussing trivial matters that have little impact on our lives? Whether it's sports (my favorite diversion), politics, or social media, we spend hours every week (day?) on these matters. A study in 2020 showed that the average social media user spends 2 hours and 33 minutes on the six major social media platforms every day! While there can be some good things that come from social media, we can agree that most of it is negative. We have magnified the trivial while ignoring matters of greater importance.

This Christmas, we will spend much time decorating, hanging lights, shopping for

presents, baking cookies, traveling to see family and friends, putting up a tree, and going to parties. At what point do we stop and consider the meaning of Christmas? Where do we find time to abide with Christ- God in flesh- who has come to abide in us?

Christmas is more than wrapping paper, gifts, cookies, or lights. It is pretty straightforward. God has come to earth in human form to gather humanity to God. St. Athanasius, in *On the Incarnation* writes, **“God became man that we might become God.”** We do not become God, but when we are forgiven and redeemed, God calls us to live as one with God. At Christmas, we must consider the importance of God coming to earth to save humanity as it reflects our value and worth in the eyes of God.

Consider this another way. In the classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Charlie is depressed about the holiday's commercialization. His friend, Lucy, asks him to direct a Christmas pageant. Directing a play is no help for Charlie's mood. As Lucy and the others mock Charlie's Christmas tree, he asks, *“Does anybody know what Christmas is about?”* You know how it ends. Linus takes center stage and proclaims:

*Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:
“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*

With that, Linus declares, “That is what Christmas is all about.”

This Christmas, let us spend a little less time on things that are trivial and spend time in prayer and contemplation about the meaning of Christmas- and how God invites us to live because of the Good News of the Christmas story!

Sow Much Love,

Pastor Steve

Staff Announcement: Please Welcome Pastor Neyda Albarran



The Staff-Parish Relations Committee of Avenue Church is excited to announce the hiring of Rev. Neyda Albarran as our new Pastor of Discipleship. Pastor Neyda will be joining our team on January 2, 2021.

Pastor Neyda is a third-generation pastor. Her father and grandfather are United Methodist pastors. Neyda was ordained in The Wesleyan Church in 2005. She has been in ministry since 1992 and has served throughout the church as an Associate Pastor, Outreach Pastor, and Youth Pastor. Most recently, she was the Youth Pastor at First United Methodist Church in Winter Garden, Florida.

We are excited to add Pastor Neyda to our team at Avenue because we believe that she will be a great fit with our current staff and has gifts and talents to help take the ministries of Avenue to another level. Pastor Neyda is a gifted communicator. She loves to teach and brings energy and creativity into the spaces she inhabits. Pastor Neyda is fully bilingual in Spanish and English as her family is from Puerto Rico. This will be a great asset for our church as our community continues to have a growing Latino/a population.

As an Associate Pastor at Avenue, Pastor Neyda's time will be focused on developing and growing the discipleship ministries of our church. She will be helping people get connected to our Discipleship Pathway and to train laity to be disciple-makers inside and outside of the church.

Pastor Neyda has an 11 year-old son, Ian, who will be part of the Avenue family. Neyda's first sermon at Avenue will be January 23, 2022. If you would like to send a welcome note or Christmas card, you can send it to:

Neyda Albarran
15331 Oak Apple Ct.
Winter Garden, FL 34787

THIS DECEMBER AT AVENUE CHURCH

12/5 **Family Advent Night** (5:00 p.m.)

12/12 **Miracle on Bethlehem Street** (4:00 p.m.)

12/16 **Blue Christmas Service** (6:30 p.m.)

12/24 **Lessons and Carols** (10:30 a.m.)

12/26 **Combined Worship** (10:00 a.m.)

CHRISTMAS EVE AT AVENUE CHURCH

12/23 **Traditional Christmas Eve Worship** (6:30 p.m.)

12/24 **Traditional Christmas Eve Worship** (2:30 & 9:00 p.m.)

12/24 **Contemporary Christmas Eve Worship** (4:30 & 7:00 p.m.)

LET THE WEARY WORLD REJOICE
AT THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP ON SUNDAY: Worship is held each Sunday in-person or online at 9:00 a.m. (Traditional) and 10:30 a.m. (Contemporary). We are streaming the morning worship services on our Facebook (facebook.com/avenueumc) and Youtube (youtube.com/c/avenueunitedmethodistchurch) pages.

GIVING AT AVENUE is possible through multiple ways.

- You can give your offering in-person
- You can mail your gift to: 20 N. Church St. Milford, DE 19963
- You can give online through the red “give” button on our homepage
- You can download and use our “Avenue Church DE” App on your smart phone

PASTORAL CARE: If you or someone you know is in need of pastoral care, please call the church office at 422-8111 or by contacting Dan Holt, our *Pastor of Congregational Care*. You can email Pastor Dan directly at dholt@avenueumc.com.

TAI CHI: Tai Chi is a great way to build up core strength and balance with decreased stress on joints. Please join us **Tuesday’s and Thursday’s at 9:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall**. No fees!

MAKE YOUR CHRISTMAS PLANS AT AVENUE: We are thinking about Advent and Christmas at Avenue and want you to join in during these special times of worship, study, and fellowship. Be sure to mark your calendars to get involved!

December 12th—Miracle on Bethlehem Street at 4:00 p.m.

- * Join us at 4:00 p.m. for our production of the musical, *A Miracle on Bethlehem Street*.

December 16th - Blue Christmas Service at 6:30 p.m.

- * Not everyone is happy during the holidays. Many are grieving. A Blue Christmas Service is a time to acknowledge loss and grief amidst the holidays.

December 23rd - Traditional Christmas Eve at 6:30 p.m.

- * Can’t make worship on the 24th? Experience Christmas Eve at Avenue a day early!

December 24th— Traditional Christmas Eve at 2:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Contemporary Christmas Eve at 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 pm.

- * We have a great day of worship planned on Christmas Eve. Join us for Lessons in Carols at 10:30 a.m. when we hear the Christmas story through the Scriptures and music of our faith. In the afternoon and evening Candles, Carols, and Communion make this sacred night of worship meaningful as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

December 26th— Combined Worship Service at 10:00 a.m.

- * We will have one worship service on the first Sunday of Christmas. It will be filled with Christmas Carols and a message of hope.

NEW MEMBERS CLASS will be held on **Sunday, January 16th from 11:45 a.m.—1:00 p.m.** in the Grier Room. This class is for those interested in learning more about Avenue Church, what it means to live as a Christian through the church, and to pursue becoming a member of Avenue. Please RSVP by emailing Kelly at churchoffice@avenueumc.com.

WELCOMING AND CONNECTING WITH THE CONNECTION TEAM: Last week, we unveiled a new

ministry team at Avenue Church. The Connection Team serves to welcome guest and attenders and assist them in getting connected to the ministries of Avenue Church. Over the last several months, we have been working to develop a dedicated space for the Connection Team. That space is the newly renovated stone wall with the TV's in the foyer. This will be space where people can ask questions, fill out a connect card, and learn more about the ministries of the church.

If you would like to participate in the Connection Team, you can contact Karen Schneider at careercounselorde@gmail.com.

COFFEE NOW IN FELLOWSHIP HALL: We are excited to be able to offer coffee, tea, and hot chocolate on Sunday mornings. You can find these refreshments in Fellowship Hall. We are thankful for Donna Hill and her service to Avenue in providing this act of hospitality each week.

JOB OPENINGS - NURSERY WORKERS: We are looking to re-open our nursery and are in need of additional nursery attendants. Interested parties must be available on Sundays from 8:30 a.m. through Noon. Attendants must complete a background check. CPR certification is recommended. This is a paid position. Please email your resume and a cover letter to srlamotte@avenueumc.com

CONFIRMATION 2022 | A FIRM FOUNDATION: We are calling out to all 7th and 8th grade students as we prepare to begin a new year of Confirmation Classes. Confirmation is a journey for 7th/8th grade students to explore what it means to be a Christian and to have the opportunity to claim their faith on their own and becoming a member of Avenue United Methodist Church.

Classes will begin in January and we will meet at least once a month on Sundays at 5:00 p.m. Confirmation students are expected to attend all classes (there is some grace) and be a regular participant in worship. Students will have some work to do during the process, and we'll have a good time while we are at it. Students will be confirmed on June 5, 2022, which is Pentecost Sunday. Please email Pastor Steve at srlamotte@avenueumc.com to register for Confirmation Class 2022.

MILFORD LIONS CLUB: Milford Lions Club is collecting used eyeglasses. There is a donation box in the coat closet.

MEAL TRAIN AT AVENUE: Health Ministries is looking for folks in the Avenue family who like to cook and would like to prepare meals for those who are sick, who have had loved ones pass, or who have had new babies as a way to care for one another. If you would like to receive emails when we need meals, you can email Sharon at sharonclendaniel@msn.com or call at (302) 390-6368.

MILFORD COMMUNITY PANTRY: The holiday season is upon us. As you shop on Amazon you can help the Milford Community Pantry. Use smile.amazon.com and select your charity. Enter Milford Community Pantry, Milford, DE and then everything you shop through Amazon Smile we will receive a small credit. It is easy and cost you nothing. We receive a check and are very grateful. Trite is true ... ***Remember the reason for the season.*** No matter where you shop we celebrate the gift of Jesus. **The food pantry needs cereal.**

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN (UMW): United Methodist Women meet monthly in small groups

and circle meetings at Avenue Church. Esther Circle meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. and Sarah Circle meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. If you think you might be interested in being part of a mission minded group of women, please plan to come to one of these meetings. You will be welcome and lifted up. For further information, please call Beth Parker at (302) 382-5581 or bparke42@comcast.net.

Sarah Circle will be meeting at Sharon Brown's residence on December 17th at 11:30 a.m. Please bring a covered dish.

CHRISMON- BRING JOY TO CHILDREN THIS CHRISTMAS: As for many years, children of The Milford School District are the recipients of your generous gifts for Christmas. Due to this year's societal circumstances, we are asking for Monetary Donations. Gift cards will be purchased for children. Last year you provided for 152 children – 63 families and a few adults. In addition, at the request of Pastor Steve hats and gloves for children, women or men will gladly be accepted, unwrapped and may be placed beneath the Sanctuary Chrismon Tree.

UNITED METHODIST MEN PANCAKE BREAKFAST— United Methodist Men are proud to serve their first pancake breakfast in over a year. Mark your calendars for **January 16th**. This year you will be able to dine in or carry out. Donations will be very much appreciated.

DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNSHINE BIBLE CLASS: The Sunshine Bible Class for adults led by Rev. John Van Tine, retired, is meeting in the Grier Room at 10:15 a.m.. Our study for December is "Wait for It." The lesson for December 12th lesson is "Mary's Pondering" based on Luke 1:26-38, 46-55; December 19th lesson is "Waiting for Prophecy to Be Fulfilled" based on Luke 2:25-38; and December 26th lesson is "Jesus is Waiting" based on Revelation 3:20-4:11. Plan to join us in the Grier Room for these exciting lessons.

SISTERS BIBLE STUDY: We start a new study "Angels" by David Jeremiah in January. Join us and bring a friend. We will meet on **January 4th** at 10:00 a.m. in the Grier Room, so please be a few minutes early.

CODE PURPLE: CODE PURPLE provides shelter for homeless men and women during the winter months. This will be the fifth year that Avenue has been a CODE PURPLE site for homeless men in the Milford area. Avenue provides shelter in the Wesley Room from December 1st through March 15th.

We desperately need male volunteers to be overnight host at Avenue Church. Each shift is from 8:15 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. Arrangements can be made in the morning if you need to leave earlier than 7:00 a.m. If you are interested in serving, please contact Tom Chilton at chilto@aol.com

SMALL GROUPS—ADVENT STUDY: Rev. John Van Tine, Retired, will continue to lead an Advent Study on Wednesday, December 8, 2021, in the Holzmueller Room at 6:30 p.m. The study is "The Heart That Grew Three Sizes: Finding Faith in the Story of the Grinch." This study will help you rediscover and reinvigorate your Christian faith this Advent and Christmas season and look at this familiar classic through the lens of faith. All are welcomed.

Our Lord brings us calm....

³⁷ *A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* ³⁸ *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" – Mark 4:37-38*

I can only speak for myself, but there are certain stories in Scripture that I ponder on with the thought... *Oh, I would love to have seen that!* If I had a "top-5" list of such stories, a rival for 1st place would be Jesus asleep in the boat with His disciples amidst the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee. Maybe it's because this scene has been depicted so vividly in art work, or maybe just my own experiences on the water, especially in rough seas, but it's hard to not feel a connection to this captivating scene. It is so interesting that a few of Jesus' disciples were actually fishermen, professionals of the water, and yet they were afraid. I have to wonder if the collective thought of all on board, save Jesus, was the question... Will we ever touch solid ground again? Of course, as we know from the story, the fearful disciples woke Jesus from His slumber and He in turn calms the frightful wind and waves, yet challenges His friends... *Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?* The most dedicated of Jesus' followers, those closest to Him during His brief ministry on this earth, were scared, anxious and uncertain whether they would survive the situation they were collectively in, even though Jesus was literally in the boat with them.

For even the most faithful among us, when we have experienced loss, we can feel like we are adrift in a boat with raging seas all around us, wondering if the waters around us will ever grow calm; unsure if we will ever be able to stand on solid ground again. As in the Scripture story, Jesus is the only presence who can bring calm to the storms that we face. Not unlike a life-ring found on most boats, Jesus is our life-ring. Our job is to simply hold on as we allow our Lord to calm the wind and waves that encircle us, enabling us, in time, and through the strength of His presence, to once again stand on the solid ground of our lives. Like the disciples taught us some two thousand years ago, let us keep our faith in the One who is even greater than the storms that we face.... it is He who will see us safely to shore.... Amen

www.daybreakcounselling.org



Code Purple “To-Go” Items Needed

The opening night of the Code Purple season is just around the corner. Avenue operates as a cold-weather shelter for homeless men in our community from December through the beginning of March. Code Purple is looking for "to-go" items to give to the men as they leave each day. If you'd like to donate items, please bring them to the church office during business hours.

Suggested Items Placed in a Quart Sized Ziploc Bag

Juice

Canned Sausage

Breakfast Bars

Pop-Tarts

Code Purple Also Needs

Coffee

Bottled Water

Sugar

Original Coffee-Mate (Liquid)

Hot Cups



After being silenced
for a full year...

THE MILFORD COMMUNITY BAND

Is back and stronger than ever!



Come out and enjoy live holiday music:

Sunday, December 12, 2021, 3:00 PM

Milford High School Auditorium
1019 N Walnut Street, Milford, DE

Saturday, December 18, 2021, 3:00 PM

First Baptist Church of Dover
301 Walker Road, Dover, DE

• Free Admittance • Donations Welcomed

**For more information about the MCB, visit
www.MilfordCommunityBand.org**



This organization is supported, in part, by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The Division promotes Delaware arts events on www.DelawareScene.com.

Miracle on Bethlehem Street

A Musical for All Ages

OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY

Multi-generational participation:

Families with children . . .

youth . . . single adults . . . senior adults . . .

ONLY 4 REHEARSALS

Learn your music at home with mp3 files

PRESENTATION

Sunday, December, 12th at 4:00PM

For more information, contact Kevin Chamberlain KBChamberlain@avenueumc.com



POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

The Sanctuary is never prettier than it is when the poinsettias arrive for December. Placing poinsettias in the church in memory or honor of loved ones is a beautiful and cherished tradition.

This year we will again only be ordering 6.5" pots of poinsettias at **\$7.50** each. The Altar Guild has requested that we only order 100 pots of flowers and in **RED** only. All additional funds will go to the Parish Purse.

Sponsor's Name _____

Memory of _____

Honor of _____

The cost for each Poinsettia is: 6.5" pot \$7.50 _____

The Altar Guild has requested that we order only **RED** Poinsettias this year.

Please Print Clearly

**Please use a separate order form for each name
in memory of or honored**

Names of sponsors and those remembered and honored will be in the Worship Folder on December 19th and Christmas Eve.

Please make checks payable to Avenue United Methodist Church

Orders MUST be in no later than Wednesday, December 15th



ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS TO:

- **Russ and Harriet Davies who will be** celebrating their **61st** anniversary on **December 24th**.

SYMPATHY TO:

- The family and friends of **Jean Hutchman** who passed away on December 1, 2021.
Jean joined Avenue on November 11, 2007.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

- Those affected by the COVID-19, Medical Staff, and distributing the vaccine.
- The arrival, safety and effectiveness of the recently approved COVID vaccine.
- Our local, national, and world leaders.
- Our District Superintendent (Rev. Joseph Archie), Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, and The United Methodist Church.
- Our Pastors, Staff, and Leadership of Avenue United Methodist Church.

PRAYER REQUEST:

Frank & Frances Beebe
Brenda Beissel
Dale Brandon
Charlene Johnson Cannon
Lydia Castro
Adriel Castro and family
Alex Castro and family
Mary Charnick
Ginny Clendaniel
Jack & Denney Collins
Luisa & Billy Combs
Lauren Connell
Susan Cooper
Craig
Rick Crump
Joanna Denney-Turner
William Ernst
Ken Fechter
Charlie & Barbara
Fleetwood
Jayne Frank
Jason, Joanna & Garrett
Franklin
Todd French
Gail & Jeffrey
Tom Glenn
Connie Grieship
Alina Guido
Nikki Gustafson
Al Hanna

Sam Hanna
Dave Harris
Beverly Harrison
Karl Isele
Ron Ivory
Jerry Jackson
David Johnson
Dean Johnson
Joie
Justin
Chris K.
Katie and family
Linda Kemp
Doris Koon
Rhoda & Greg Kurz
Jean Layton
Nancy Lee
Brittany Poore Little
Jack & Zelda McDuff
Reagan McGovern
Donna Meck
Sonny Meck
Tiffany Medlin
Megan
Susie Miller
Orville Mills
Stan Moody
Jean Murphy
Jason Neall
Larry Passwaters

Laurel Pastor
Charles Paulaitis
Ron Payne
Walt Peters
Patty R
Millie Remick
Roy Rigby
Dick Roberts
Lorna Rosella Rulona
Phil Saint
Richard Sapp
Vicki Schultes
Alice Sellers
Lexi Silicato
Roland Simms
Racheal Simesak
Linda Singleton
Samuel Smith
Carrie Sullivan
Brenda Thompson
Joan Wadman
TJ Webb
Josh Willey
Danny Wine
Dorothy Yates
Betty Ziesel