



THE NEW DOVER HERALD

December 2021

Vol. 184

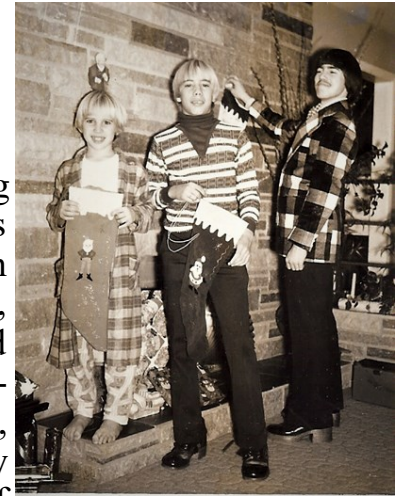
A Ministry Newsletter of New Dover United Methodist Church

CHUCK'S CHURCH CHAT

Saints,

Grace to you and peace in this season of darkness into light...

One of the fondest memories of my childhood, teen, and young adult years was pitching in to prepare our home for the Christmas holidays. Thanksgiving weekend was the starting line back then when we would pull down the folded ladder from the garage ceiling, climb up, and carry the dusty boxes down from attic. Once downstairs we opened them to reveal sets of electric window candles, plastic Santas, an Astro-turf wreath with two bronze-colored angels, tangled strings of lights, ornaments, and Grandmom's antique chalkware Nativity set- Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, wise men, sheep, ox, and a couple of donkeys- all of whom had been sleeping soundly since last January 2nd. Looking back, I think I enjoyed those four weeks of decorating the house almost as much as waking up on Christmas Day to a bounty of presents under the tree (notice I said *almost!*).



The first set of electric candles I can recall Scotch-taping to the window sill so they wouldn't fall off were white plastic candlesticks with blue bulbs that glowed so hot you would get third degree burns if you weren't careful. Later on we got the red plastic candles with the tapered red, orange, and yellow bulbs that resembled a flame, and were also hot as the blazes. Along with the high wattage Christmas tree lights, I wonder to this day how our house avoided burning to the ground! Many of us who survived those days think our modern, cool-burning LED lights are for sissies!

Along with the indoor lights, once our front bushes grew big enough, I was given the task of laying strings of twinkle lights, some blinking, some not, across their boughs. The process was to drape the lights, plug them in, then jog out to the road to see if they looked balanced. It always took hours to get them just right, and adjustments had to be made almost daily depending on such variables as wind-conditions, and snowfall. In those long-ago days before so many neighborhood front yards looked like Disney World, we were in the top tier of Christmas decorations on our hometown Jericho Road!

Once all the indoor and outdoor bedecking was accomplished the only thing remaining was the Christmas Tree itself. Before I was old enough to drive, it was Dad's unenviable task to get the right tree and Mom's steadfast duty to point out its "*crooked trunk!*" Mom's crooked-trunk critique was a constant each season, even though every tree, once decorated always looked miraculously beautiful despite its malformed trunk (think Charlie Brown's tree).

I imagine that by the time this edition of The Herald arrives, many of you will be well on your way to preparing your own home for the holidays. And despite all the numerous tasks, traditions, and hard work necessary, you will be fully ready for Santa to arrive this December 25th. In the Christian calendar, the four-week period leading up to Jesus' birth is known as Advent, meaning "arrival." This too is a time of preparation, not of our homes, but of our hearts. Throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas, our hours spent in worship and devotions ought to do for our hearts what the candles, wreaths, and twinkling lights do for our homes. This Advent, shouldn't we be putting as much, if not more, effort into getting ourselves ready to receive the Christ child as we do our houses?

Of course we should! Because without that blessed time of spiritual preparation, our hearts will resemble an unadorned house at Christmas, whose decorations remain boxed in the attic! So let's make the most of the time before us and remember that the month-long Advent journey to Bethlehem is just as important as our arrival!

God bless us all in our preparations!

Chuck



Christmas Services

7pm Christmas Eve

11pm Christmas Eve

11pm Watch Night Service on 12/31

Note: There will be no Saturday Praise services on 12/25 and 1/1

KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS



Manny & Nora De La Paz
Pat & Brian
June Ebbets
Lulu Kamenas & family
Erin, Kenley, Quentin
The Manglapus Family
Misty Kramer
Gail Engel

Service men & women
Veterans
Homeless, unemployed
& uninsured
All affected by Covid-19 and
their families
All Elderly of NDUMC

Pray for all those affected by Natural Disasters, those suffering with addictions, those suffering from depression, Victims of terrorism & violence, all national leaders, and all those serving at New Dover UMC.

All doctors, nurses, EMT, teachers, grocery store workers, janitors, and all other frontline workers. Thank you and God Bless.

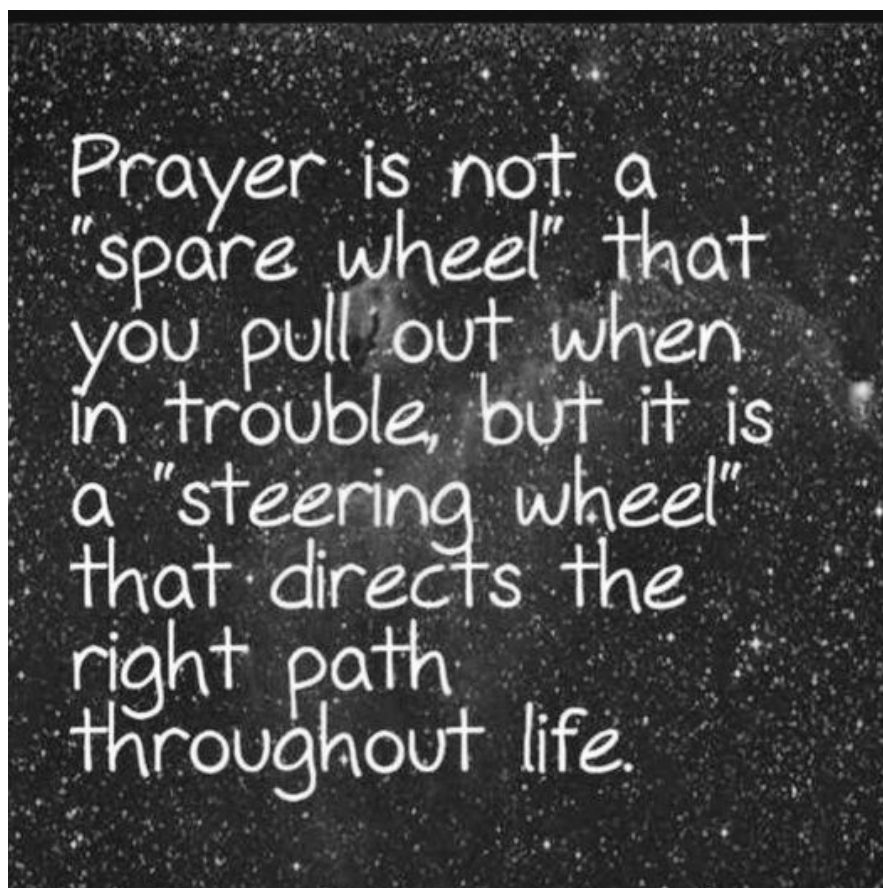
If you wish to add anyone to the 2021 permanent prayer list, please contact Karen Rowland at krowland648@yahoo.com

FROM YOUR PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

PLEASE JOIN US FOR PRAYER FELLOWSHIP EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING AT 10 AM

In This Issue:

- Chuck's Church Chat
- Christmas Services
- Keep Us in Your Prayers
- Sermon of the Month
- Year in Review
- Christmas Luncheon & Stars for Charity Auction
- Food Baskets
- Poinsettia Sale
- UMW News
- December Birthdays & Anniversaries
- Membership Corner



SERMON OF THE MONTH

“A World in Solemn Stillness”

(Preached on Christmas Eve, 2020)

Isaiah 58:6-10 & Ephesians 5:6-14

Every Advent and Christmas we sing hymns and carols; many we know so well we can sing them without even having to think of the words, to the point where we often gloss over the meaning the songs are attempting to convey. They become sentimental memories of a time we've left behind, about an event that happened once 2,000 years ago, but for which we know so little. But this week, when thinking about where we are on this night of all nights, in this year of all years, some of the words of the carols are all too relevant. They suddenly leap from the page with a truth we've perhaps never taken so seriously before.

Perhaps on this Christmas Eve at the close of 2020, we might hear them, really hear them for the first time...

“...the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”
“Disperse the gloomy clouds of night. And death's dark shadow put to flight.”
“The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.”

That line, ***“the world in solemn stillness”*** leapt out at me this week when I thought of the state of the world, both on the night of Jesus' birth, and on this night as well. When I looked into the history of “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” from which those words were taken (*the carol, by the way, that happened to be my Dad's favorite*) I discovered a deep truth moving beneath the surface.

The carol was written by Reverend Edmund Sears, pastor of a Unitarian Church in Massachusetts, and he wrote it, not in a happy, joyful time in his life, but during a period of personal melancholy, in 1849 “with news of revolution in Europe and the United States' war with Mexico had led him to question the future of our world.” Sears portrayed the human condition in the middle of the 19th century was anything but joyful:

***And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow...***

One critic wrote that the carol is remarkable for its focus not in Bethlehem, but the writer's own time, and on the contemporary issue of war and peace. But in a way that is true for any hymn or carol if *it* is to be true in the world to which it was written. On the surface Christmas carols are about the miraculous birth of our Savior in Bethlehem, truly an event to be sung about and celebrated. But if they fail to speak to us in the here and now, they lose most of their power.

As we gather together tonight, just a few of us here in the sanctuary, most of you at home in front of your screens, wanting to be together in more than just a spiritual sense, we feel very much like the Palestinian world felt 2,000 years ago, like we're living in a sort of limbo. We've been through long months of stress, despair, and loss, forced to distance ourselves from one another, even our closest family members. Some of us have suffered the loss of loved ones dear to us. And then, perhaps the cruelest blow of all, after seeing the numbers of the infected and dying drop in the late summer and early fall, our spirits tumbled again when we witnessed the number of infections go back up to a point higher than even in the horrible days of spring. And even though we know that help is on the way in the form of promising vaccines, the end of this plague seems so, so far away.

And so... our ***“ world in solemn stillness lays...”***

Saints, that’s the same state the world was in 2,000 years ago. But then something astonishing happened:

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

So you see, it was just when the world was immersed in darkness, that the light of God broke into human history in the flesh. And in the words of John: ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”*** And Saints, there’s hope we can yet glean from that light in Bethlehem. And that’s because what shone forth in that “little town of Bethlehem” was not confined to that little town of Bethlehem. What shone forth 2,000 years ago was not extinguished 2,000 years ago! We too live in a world in solemn stillness, and if so, perhaps we ought to expect God to shine that same light into our world as well.

The world and the time that God chose to send Jesus into was one in which the vast majority of the population were either sad, angry, or desperate. And there were good reasons for them to suffer from such emotions. John Dominic Crossan, whose written numerous books on the life of Jesus tells us- ***“There was no middle class in the ancient world. There were the haves and the have nots, to put it very simply.”*** Those who suffered debilitating or contagious diseases were scorned or isolated from the general population. The political ruler of Palestine, King Herod, cared far more about clinging to power than he did caring for the people he was entrusted to rule. Matthew described the horrendous lengths he went to: the murder of the innocents, in an attempt to snuff out even the faintest threat to his rein. And to top it off the religious leaders cared more about collaborating with the political leaders than heeding the word of God as contained in their scripture.

Where was hope to be found? the people cried. Where were the prophets? Where was the call to share among one another? And where was that promised messiah who was supposed to bring light to the enveloping darkness? By this time the vast majority of the people had been down so long they were numbed to silence. A world in solemn stillness... This was the world Jesus was born into.

But what of our world? What world would Jesus be born into on this night? Unfortunately, a world all too similar to that 2,000 years prior. It’s a world with a shrinking middle class, increasingly about the haves and have-nots, where the rich only get richer and the poor increase in number by the hundreds of thousands every week. Where we’re not only divided because of a deadly virus, but by deadly divergent ideologies. Where political leaders care infinitely more about clinging to power than the lives they were elected to serve. Where scores of religious leaders care more about collaborating with the political leaders than heeding the word of God as contained in their scripture. And so we too cry out, “Where is our hope to be found?” Like the Jews of first century Palestine, we too have been down so long we’re getting numb to the silence. Our world in solemn stillness...

Ours is a world that needs a birth of hope just as much as the world of 2,000 years ago, is it not? So where is the light? Where? Open your eyes, O Saints, because it is all around us! It is around us, over us, under us, in us and through us! We are that light! Listen to the words of Isaiah...

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

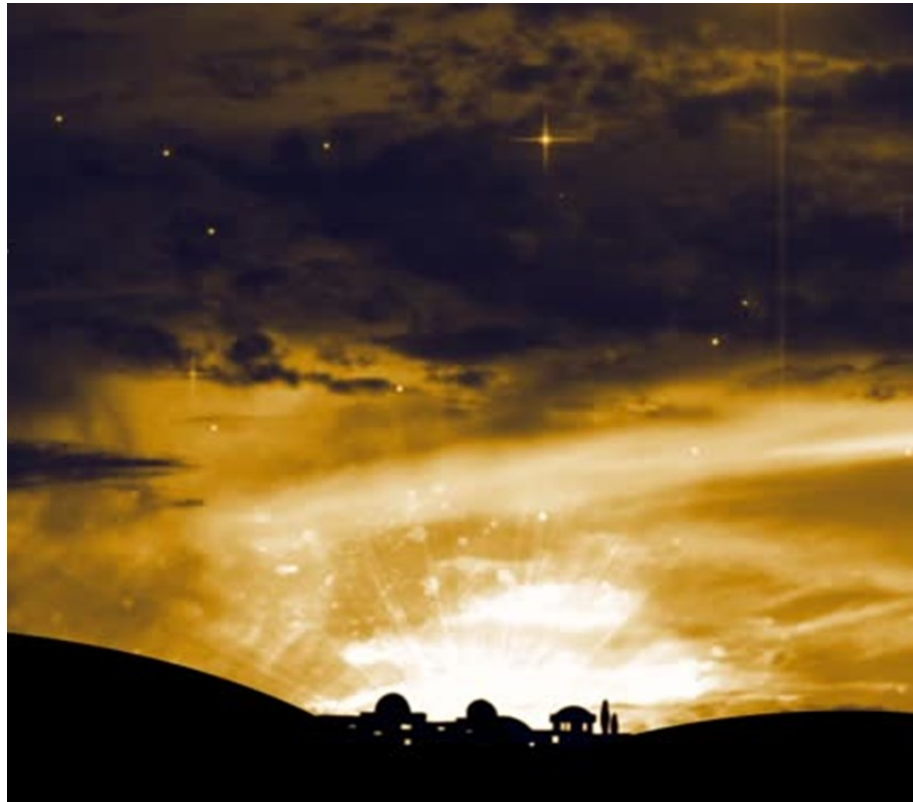
Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

***your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."***

Those ancient words, like the words of the carols we sing still possess the most potent of powers- the light of Bethlehem, that in the words from John's gospel, "***yet shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it!***"

Not that the darkness doesn't try! Whenever we go forth with light and hope there will be those who would like nothing better than to extinguish the light and bury the hope, like Herod murdering infants, or Caiaphas handing Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified, but you see they have no true power over us, as long as we continue to shine! So whatever you do, don't fall for their fear, deception, and pessimism! Our world in solemn stillness lays, but not for long! So before we receive the light from the Christ Candle, symbolizing our hope and optimism for the future, let us heed the wisdom found in these words from Ephesians:

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be associated with them. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true...Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'





NEW DOVER AT A GLANCE IN 2021





**COME AND CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS!
DECEMBER 12TH AFTER SERVICE. WE WILL
HAVE LUNCH, LISTEN TO MUSIC AND HAVE
AN AUCTION OF STARS PAINTED BY BILL
BUNTING AND OTHER ARTISTS INCLUDING
OUR OWN.**

**PROCEEDS FROM THE AUCTION GO TO FOOD PANTRIES IN
NEW JERSEY TO HELP FEED THE HOMELESS AND FOOD
DEPRIVED.**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE A STAR, PLEASE SEE
BILL BUNTING FOR DETAILS.**



There are currently 12 families on the Food Basket list. If you know a family in need who would benefit from receiving a basket, please complete the form found on the office door and they will be added to the list.

Food needed: turkeys, hams, boxed mash potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, canned vegetables, stuffing, soups, cookie mixes, pie fillings, cake mixes.

Baskets and gifts to be distributed on December 19.





Poinsettia Plants & Memorials



Please fill out the form below and return it along with your payment to the table set up in Fellowship Hall. **Orders will be taken on November 28 and December 5th.**

The plants will be used to decorate the Sanctuary for Christmas. Donations to the Memorial Fund and/or the Endowment Fund may also be given in Lieu of a plant order.

Order deadline: December 5

Please make checks payable to New Dover UMC

Plant Qty: _____

Cost is \$10.00 per plant

Total Amount: \$ _____

Memorial Fund: \$ _____

Endowment Fund: \$ _____

Please print all information below

In Honor of:

In Memory of:

Given by:

UMW News

- Our next meeting is December 8 - Our Christmas Celebration with covered dish, Christmas story, Christmas carols and Christmas craft, dessert and beverages will be provided. **All women are invited to attend.**
- This will be our last meeting until March of 2022.

Please continue to support our ongoing mission projects. As a reminder they are;

- Personal care products for the Women of the Veteran's Homes of Menlo Park. Items included are body wash, shampoo, deodorant, bath powder, combs, toothpaste & tooth brushes, Chapstick, body lotions, lipstick, scarves (new) and jewelry. All items should be new (please no samples).
- "Pop tabs" from cans for Ronald McDonald House in Long Branch, NJ.

Many blessing at this wonderful time of the year! Sincerely, Dianne Petersen, UMW President

December Birthdays

*Sherry Katkar
Herbert H. Wittke
Gem Aludino
Mae Kiefer
Joycelyn Meade
Regan Christie
Brian Richards
Craig Gilmore
Alice Lamoreau
Paulette Harland
Edward Ladym
Stephanie Rademacher
Sarisha Christian
Peter Nyema
Melanie Taylor
Brian Rademacher
Jim Dalton
Mukesh Christian
Mackenze Chesney
Roz Pizont
Ruzwalt Khristi
Ashley Rademacher
Brian Chesney*

December Anniversaries

*Adelfo Gonzalez & Donna Sucheski
Gerry & Rosalina Allarey
Hemant & Rosemary Raju*



A Perfect Gift For Christmas

**by: Susan Y. Nikitenko
December 20th, 2010**

**Tired, weary from trav'ling;
Homeless and on their own.
Needing so, a place of rest;
They felt so alone.**

**Mother with child, suffering;
Needing a place to lay.
The new born king would come;
Born to the world that day.**

**No room was found in the inn;
No shelter from the night.
But God provided a star;
And many followed the light.**

**Though it seemed a need unmet;
God provided that day.
A stable, a manger bed;
And a soft place to lay.**

**He sent angels to shepherds;
To announce this great birth.
A birthday celebration;
The day God came to earth.**

**Emmanuel was His name;
The Christ, the new born King.
Jesus, promised child of God;
A perfect offering.**

**God provided the angels;
God provided the praise.
Glory to God in the highest;
The greatest of birthdays.**

**If God so celebrated;
The birth of Christ the King.
If angels glorified Him;
And many heard them sing.**

**If wise men followed the star;
Baring gifts of great worth.
Should we not celebrate;
The day that Christ came to earth?**

**Is He not worth the honor?
For He was born for us.
Wasn't He a beautiful gift;
A perfect gift for Christmas?**

**Our lights and our candles;
Our carolers praising.
Our pageantries of Christmas;
Our instruments raising.**

**The bells and the whistling;
Joyful songs always sung.
And Christmas decorations;
Swooping, twinkling and swung.**

**The evergreen and it's lights;
The Christmas story read.
A birthday celebration;
A cake of gingerbread.**

**If wise men followed the star;
Baring gifts of great worth.
Should we not celebrate;
The day that Christ came to earth?**

**Is He not worth the honor?
For He was born for us.
Wasn't He a beautiful gift;
A perfect gift for Christmas?**

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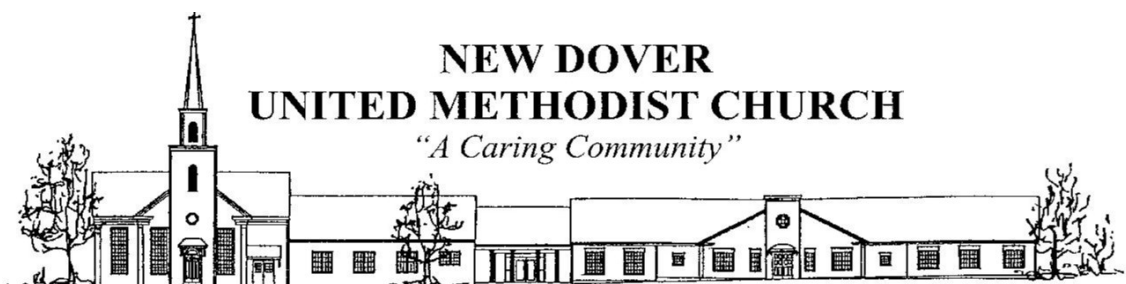
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**NEW DOVER
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"A Caring Community"

