

THE PORTLIGHT

A newsletter for members and friends of Portland Avenue United Methodist Church

Christmas at The PORT



December 18 at 10 am - Children's Christmas Program

Support our children as they grow in their faith through a contemporary telling of the Christmas story. We will also celebrate our annual March to the Manger offering during worship.

December 24 at 4:30 pm - Christmas Eve Worship

Celebrate the birth of Christ with this family-friendly service which includes candlelight while singing "Silent Night."

December 25 at 10 am - Christmas Day Worship

Begin Christmas Day celebrating the reason for the season with a service of Christmas Carols and the stories behind them. Children are welcome to come in their pajamas and to bring a favorite new toy.

December 2016

Our Mission

"To grow followers of Jesus who change the world."

Our Vision

"To be a safe harbor along life's journey."

The **PORT**
A safe harbor along life's journey.

Pastor's Message *Rev. Carol Zaagsma*

We began the season of Advent on Sunday, November 27. "Advent" literally means "the arrival of a notable person, thing or event." Of course, for Christians, the season of Advent represents a time when we are awaiting the arrival of Jesus. Because we are waiting, our time is filled with anticipation, preparation and hope.

We sing "O come, O come, Emmanuel..." and "Come, thou long expected Jesus..." as signs of our expectant waiting. These familiar hymns remind us that we are longing for someone very special to arrive in our midst. They also remind us to prepare faithfully as we wait for his arrival, so that we are ready for him when he comes.

The newly formed Evangelism & Church Growth Team has been similarly preparing for the arrival of new guests at our Sunday morning worship services, so that we will be more ready for them when they come. God's Spirit has blessed us with a number of first-time guests at The PORT this year, and we haven't always been organized and intentional in how we welcome them. We're ready now to begin a more organized way of welcoming and following up with these guests. I hope you will see how you can help in this important effort.

One thing that would be really helpful is for you to fill out your Connection Card when they are introduced in worship. Not only is your name important, but making note of any volunteer hours you were involved in during the week (at church, another organization, or even casually for a neighbor) gets reported to our denomination each week, as they consider how much people volunteer to be a sign of our congregation's health. Filling out your Connection Card will naturally encourage others around you to do the same. Offer your neighbor a pen if they need one to write with. Then be ready to place your Connection Card in the offering plate as it is passed. Modeling this will help remind those next to you to put theirs in the plate, too.

Another thing that will be very helpful is for you to be aware when you come to church on Sunday mornings. It's natural to want to catch up with your closest friends when you come to church, but it could make all the difference in the world if you were to step out of your comfort zone and approach someone you do not know. Maybe it is their first time here, and for you to say "Hi, did it take you long to get here?" might be

the beginning of a conversation that helps them to feel included.

I remember when Doris Garvey did that for me when I first visited my sending church (the church I was a member of when I transitioned to being a pastor). I sat next to Doris in worship, and afterwards she told me that she was legally blind, but still likes coming to church. And then, with sincerity, she told me how glad she was that I came to church there that morning, and that she hoped I would come again. Each of us has the opportunity to be like Doris when we see someone we don't know here at church. She didn't really do anything fancy – she was just friendly and sincere, and initiated the conversation with me.

We will soon train our Welcomers, who will be stationed at a Welcome Center in the narthex shortly before and also after worship. Those of you who are not Welcomers will want to help encourage a first-time guest to go to the Welcome Center. So when you sit next to a first-time guest, please offer to go with them to the Welcome Center after worship so that the Welcomers can speak with them for a moment and give them a gift for visiting that day.

After a first-time guest visits us, a member of the Evangelism & Church Growth Team will send them an email or letter thanking them for coming, and inviting them to take a brief survey to share their experience with us. Comments from the survey will help us learn what is important to those who visit, and give us some ideas upon which we can improve.

I'm counting on you to recognize that we all have a role to play and a responsibility in helping others feel comfortable here, and to embrace the steps you can take to make this happen.

"Advent" prepares us for "the arrival of a notable person, thing or event." I think God is calling us to welcome in a new way not only Jesus this season, but first-time guests, by recognizing that each one is a notable person sent to us by God. Let us get ready for their arrival.

Serving with you,

Pastor Carol



December 2016

Dec. 4 Madolyn & Joshua
 Dec. 11 Janea & Luke
 Dec. 18 Rylie & Oliver
 Dec. 24 Katelyn
 Dec. 25 Jeremiah



Youth Group News



December brings one of our favorite events, volunteering at Feed My Starving Children December 3 from 4:30-6:30 pm. This is something we do every year as a group. We enjoy the fellowship of one another while serving God and helping His children. On December 18 at 6:30 pm we will have our Christmas party where we will enjoy some pizza, snacks and make gingerbread houses! That will lead us into our winter break to enjoy the holiday season with our family and friends and we will start back together after the 1st of the year! Merry Christmas to everyone!

Sunday School News

Sunday School will be on Christmas Break Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. We'll be back in class Jan. 8 at 8:45 am.

DECEMBER Schedule for Sunday Volunteers

	December 4	December 11	December 18	December 24	December 25
Coffee & Treats	Neil & Kay Livingston	Laurette Lawson	Nancy Hagerty, Linda Knopp	N/A	No Fellowship
Greeters	Jocelyne & Josiah Medzagoh	Daniel & Alisa Smith	Todd & Julie Rasmussen	Lynn Livingston, Linda Dicks	Jeff & Denise Carroll
Ushers	Guy Moore, Beth Cameron, Scott Rice, Jocelyne Medzagoh	Bruce Benson, Jocelyne Medzagoh, Rod & Peggy Bacheller	Guy Moore, Pat Ekstrom, Jacob Lawson, Laurette Lawson	Scott & Kathy Swenson, Steve & Linda Knopp	Bruce Benson, Guy Moore, Jocelyne Medzagoh, Scott Rice
Welcomers	Ginny Karki	Judy & Eric Richardson-Mahre	LaVonne Robinson	N/A	Jean & Guy Moore
Reader	Bob Deese	George Dalin	Linda Dicks	Various	Jeff Carroll
Sound	Dave Smith	Eric Richardson-Mahre	Tim Madsen	Tim Madsen	Dave Smith
Media	Tim Madsen	Dave Smith	Dave Smith	Tim Madsen	Barb Andrus
Nursery	Mary Lou Johnson	Janet Rush	Denise Carroll	N/A	Linda Lounsbury
Closer	Tom Wellman	Harvey Erstad	Steve Knopp	Steve Knopp	Jeff Carroll
Communion Stewards	Charles & Karen Groth	<p>Want to serve on Sunday mornings? Let the office know and we'll put you in touch with the appropriate coordinator.</p>			
Communion Servers	Steve & Kathy Soucy, Mary Nelson, Verne Witt				

Mission Outreach

Give a Little Gift Recap

Thank you for your overwhelming support of the Walker Health Center's "Give a Little Gift" campaign throughout the month of October. We donated quite a collection of slipper socks, hand lotion, candies, and other items that residents of Walker Health Center will enjoy receiving for Christmas.



Simpson Shelter Meals

The Mission Outreach Team is looking for another leader to help coordinate a group from The PORT in cooking and serving a meal at Simpson Shelter in the coming year. Jodi Anders volunteered to co-lead this effort, so we're looking for someone to work with her. If that sounds like a ministry God is calling you to, please see Pastor Carol or Jodi.

Mission Opportunity at Operation Christmas Child Distribution Center

The Outreach Team reserved 12 spaces for a group of volunteers to work at the distribution center, packing shoeboxes for shipment around the world. This is fairly rigorous work, but always a lot of fun.

Our shift is on Saturday, December 17, from 9-1 pm. Don't miss out - see Pastor Carol to reserve your spot.

Operation Christmas Child

It's been over twenty years since Samaritan's Purse began delivering Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts, helping to bring the message and true meaning of

Christmas to children around the world. Shoeboxes are sent to many different climates and cultures, so here are some suggestions regarding most useful gifts:

Best Gifts:

- Soccer ball (deflate and send with a pump)
- Brand new short-sleeved shirts with no writing (boys and girls often wear torn hand-me-downs, so a new shirt is really appreciated)
- Small flashlight with batteries
- Good quality melamine plate, bowl and/or cup
- Soap and plastic soap dish that has a cover
- Toothbrush and toothbrush holder
- Pencils, erasers, colored pencils and sharpeners. Consider black, red, green and blue ink pens for kids aged 10-14, as those are required for school
- Jump ropes, marbles, harmonica, sunglasses
- Band-Aids, comb and hair elastics or head bands
- Hard candy and gum
- Socks
- Simple watch or solar calculator for older kids
- Baby doll with light brown skin and no hair
- Toy airplane, car or truck (with bigger wheels that work better in dirt)

Not-as-good items:

- Anything with instructions in English
- Any toy that is not universally recognizable (yo-yos, play-dough, flash cards and matching memory card games aren't well-known around the world)
- Stuffed animals (different animals connote evil in other countries, and you don't know the context where your shoebox is going to be sent)
- Winter hats, gloves and scarves (it's likely your box is being sent to the equator)
- Stickers and temporary tattoos
- T-shirts with words or pictures (stick with solids and stripes)
- Anything fragile



Please bring your completed shoeboxes with you to church on December 4.

We celebrate YOU during DECEMBER

If you have a birthday during the month of December but your name isn't on our list, PLEASE LET US KNOW, so we can update our records for next year.



12/02 - Steve Knopp
12/03 - Mary Rathbun
12/04 - Fredrick Wilson-Bahun
12/10 - Russ Cox
12/12 - Leo Castro
12/15 - Daisy Castro

12/18 - Karen Groth
Linda Schesso
12/21 - Cy Carpenter
12/24 - Lori Moreland
Mary Murphy
12/31 - Claire Perry

Caregivers Support Group

Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 6, from 6:30—8:00 pm, at Applewood Pointe (8341 Lyndale Ave S, Bloomington). If you are a caregiver, this is a great time to join this group. We're beginning to read *The 36-Hour Day* by Nancy Mace and Peter Rabins, and plan to discuss Chapter 1 on Dementia at this meeting. See Pastor Carol if you'd like to order a book.

Winter BINGO!

Mark your calendar now for the return of BINGO here at The Port, hosted by the Congregational Care Team on Saturday, January 14, starting at 1:00 pm.



Committee News

Pledge Drive

Thank you to all who returned completed pledge cards. There is still time to return yours if you haven't done so already. Bring it with you on Sunday morning or mail to the church office during the week. Many gathered for a Pledge Sunday Potluck on November 20. The food was delicious, and it was a great time of fellowship.



SPRC Meeting with Twin Cities District Superintendent

All members of the Church Council are encouraged to attend a meeting with our District Superintendent, Rev. Dan Johnson, on Wednesday, December 7, at 4:00 pm (for approximately an hour). The Staff Parish Relations Committee Sub-Team will be present, but since our structure is such that our Church Council functions as the full SPRC Committee during our quarterly Council meetings, all Council members are invited to come. It's a great opportunity to hear from our District Superintendent, and also to share with him your thoughts on how things are going at The PORT.

Holiday Bazaar



Thank you for your hard work at the 42nd Annual Holiday Bazaar. The stream of shoppers was steady throughout, and your friendly attitudes were ready to make it a good experience for everyone who came.



Holiday Bazaar



From our Bishop

In a letter to all United Methodists on behalf of the Council of Bishops, Council President Bishop Bruce R. Ough (also our Bishop of the Minnesota-Dakotas Episcopal Area) called for a renewed commitment to the vision of the Beloved Community of Christ. The full text of his letter is below.



November 22, 2016

To the people called United Methodist:

Grace and peace in the name of Jesus Christ!

On the eve of Advent and in the post-election climate in the United States, I write as President of the Council of Bishops to call for a renewed commitment to the vision of the Beloved Community of Christ.

Isaiah prophesied that a child would be born to re-establish the beloved community—a time of endless peace, a time of justice and righteousness, a time of reconciliation and unity.

*For a child has been born to us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
And he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be
endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He shall establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.*

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NRSV)

In a post-election article, Bishop Gregory Palmer eloquently stated the reality of a divided United States. “Everywhere we turn we are reminded of the profound fissures along the lines of gender, race, and class, just to name a few. The truth is these fissures and divisions are not new and not directly attributable to the long campaign season just ended. For many years there has been a growing trust deficit in public leadership and institutions. These are trying times, and the fabric of who we are and who we aspire to be has been stretched beyond anything we desire to look upon. But look upon it squarely we must.”

This state of division and discord is global, fueled by the racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetoric of the recent U.S. election cycle. Recently, Pope Francis

warned against the “virus of polarization” and hostility in the world targeting people of different nationalities, races, and beliefs. He was blunt and warned against animosity creeping into the church, as well, noting “we are not immune from this.” Pope Francis reminded us of “our pitiful hearts that tend to judge, divide, oppose, and condemn” and cautioned somberly against those who “raise walls, build barriers, and label people.”

As followers of the Christ, we are harbingers, models and guardians of the Beloved Community. As those baptized into the Body of Christ, we “accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves” and to renounce the spiritual forces of evil in the world, our respective nations, and the church. As disciples of Jesus, we stand against all expressions of hatred, discrimination, oppression, and exclusion. As those who serve Christ, we love whom Christ loves. As stewards of Jesus’ good news, we are peacemakers, pray for our enemies, and seek reconciliation with those from whom we have become estranged.

At the November 2010 meeting of the Council of Bishops in Panama, the Council issued a pastoral letter calling for United Methodists to be bearers of the beloved community across the globe. The letter is eerily contemporary and relevant to our current context. It points to the opportunity that is uniquely ours to bind up the wounds and to proclaim the Advent prophecy of a time of justice and righteousness. I include the full text as a reminder of the kingdom reality we are called to incarnate:

“We, the bishops of The United Methodist Church, feel compelled to renew our commitment to work to become the beloved community of Christ. We, as a Council, desire to deal with the crucial issues of racism and the sacredness of every human being. Therefore, as the spiritual and administrative leaders of the church, we issue an urgent call to the whole people of God, lay and clergy: to speak the truth in love in public and private discourse, to act with compassion, and to work for peace with justice in the world.

In order to transform the world, in faithfulness to Christ’s command, we must model respect and kindness and extinguish the fires of animosity. And thus, we call on all churches to engage in genuinely honest dialogue and respectful conversation, such that others who observe the action in our lives might declare, ‘See how they love each other!’

As people of faith, we are charged to build the beloved community because Christ has broken down the dividing walls and ended the hostilities between us. Yet, we continue to build walls in the church and the world which separate us and cause our hearts to grieve.

On the continent of Africa and in many parts of Asia, including the Middle East, the Philippines, and India, the historical and contemporary impact of colonialism, racism, tribalism, hostility, and religious persecution continue to affect human relationships.

The challenge in the Philippines is to break down the barriers between mainline society and tribal peoples. Meeting this challenge will accord equal rights such as land possession and free education for all.

By nature, colonialism in Africa thrives on hostile, violent and demeaning human relationships. Racism and tribalism cut deep wounds, not in one's flesh and blood, but also on the soul and the spirit. These gaping wounds leave permanent scars.

In Europe, racism is a growing issue, with political parties openly working against minority, ethnic, and religious communities. Prejudice is overly articulated in the media, in politics, and even in churches.

Throughout the United States, there has been a rapid escalation of violence related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religious preference. This escalation includes personal attacks, bullying, and vicious and criminal acts of violence to the mind, body, and spirit of persons. These actions diminish life for victims and their families, as well as for the perpetrators and the whole community. They are the ultimate, insidious, and irreverent attacks on the sacredness of God-given life.

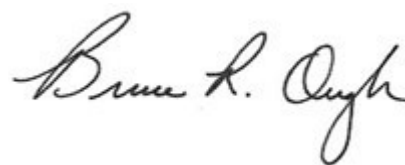
Across the world, terrorism—as demonstrated by wanton acts of violence against innocent persons—leaves a trail of loss of life, limb, home, and community. Discriminatory treatment is widely practiced against immigrants and refugees everywhere around the world. All of this creates a universal atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust, and fear. Often this is the result of religious persecution of various faith communities, including Christians, which threatens the capacity or hope for reconciliation and peace. The church is called to decisively and directly counter these acts and engender and empower a 'perfect love that casts out all fear' (I John 4:18, NRSV). Through intentional action we can 'overcome evil with good' (Romans 12:21, NRSV).

It is incumbent upon the bearers of this vision of a beloved community to do whatever we can today to hasten the day of a just world with peace. This is our hope, our prayer, and our commitment."

Friends in Christ, this is not an invitation to naïveté. People's lives, livelihoods, security, and well-being are at stake. Immigrants are scrambling for the shadows. Indigenous peoples are disrespected and forgotten. Children of color are being bullied and threatened. Muslims are being labeled and listed. Women are ridiculed and objectified. The LGBTQ community is filled with fear. Racism is being legitimized. Hundreds of millions remain impoverished without access to educational opportunities, economic resources, or equal justice.

We must stand against the meanness and hatred that is upon us. We must stand for what is best in us as people of God. We must not address the anger, fear, confusion, and insecurity of the prevailing culture with more blame, attack, and criticism. As Richard Rohr recently noted, "The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better." We must stand against bigotry, hate, and discrimination in all forms and settings. We must proclaim from our pulpits the good news that overcomes hatred and fear. We must be quick to confess our own sin and places of complicity and vigilant against all that diminishes the worth of any individual.

So, I urge all who follow the Christ to remember who we are in this time. We are the people of God called to proclaim the mighty acts of Christ who calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light. We are the people of God called to create the Beloved Community of Christ. We are people of God commanded to love as Jesus loved. We are people of God created to be the kingdom of God envisioned in the Advent prophecy and fulfilled by Jesus. This is our vision, our hope, our prayer, our opportunity, our commitment. May it be so!



Bishop Bruce R. Ough
President, Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Eagle Scout Project

Blake Mahre's Eagle Scout Project is underway, with guidance from our Trustees. On October 29, a crew organized by Blake came to clear out weeds from a raised bed on the southeast corner of the building (facing Portland Ave), install edging and relocate rock from the west side of the building to the south end (along the Fellowship Hall), and tear out some brush and plants from the west side. Planning for a new landscaping design will take place this winter, with planting scheduled for later in the spring. The work so far is looking good!



Gift Card Program

Holiday Shopping Made Easy

Great Lakes Scrip Center sells Gift Cards for vendors around the country and offers a percentage of sales to organizations to help them raise money. This has been a great fundraiser for The PORT, as we have raised almost \$12,000 to date:

- ✧ 2011 - \$3242.55
- ✧ 2012 - \$2251.71
- ✧ 2013 - \$1760.86
- ✧ 2014 - \$1881.00
- ✧ 2015 - \$1734.00

This year, as of October 31, we've raised a little over \$1,100 through the sale of gift cards. Each sale counts!

Order forms are available in the literature racks in the Sanctuary narthex. The process is simple: 1. Turn in a completed Order Form with check payment on Sunday (or send to the church office). 2. Receive your Gift Cards from Ellen Smith (our coordinator for the gift card program), usually within 1-2 weeks. How much easier could it be to help the church and get great gift cards for yourself or others? Order today!

Please note the following Holiday timing details: For gift cards, the last order date for Christmas gifts would be Dec. 11 with delivery on Dec. 18. There will be no orders submitted on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1. The next order date will be Jan. 8, with delivery a week or two after that. Please contact Ellen Smith with any questions.

Bits and Pieces

Journeys of Paul Cruise

Travel with Adam Hamilton on the Journeys of Paul Cruise next year, Oct. 6-17, 2017. Adam will provide lectures and lead worship during the cruise. It is a remarkable journey from Rome with stops in Sicily, Mykonos, Ephesus, Santorini, Athens, Corinth, Naples, and Pompeii. For more information or to register, call Educational Opportunities Tours at 800-247-0017 or check their website at www.eo.travel/biblicalcruises.

Christmas Markets Cruise

Experience the Christmas Markets Cruise with Mike Slaughter, author of *Down to Earth: The Hopes & Fears of All the Years are Met in Thee Tonight*, next year, Dec. 3-11, 2017. You will travel to Nuremberg, Regensburg, Passau, Linz/Salzburg, Melk, Vienna, and Budapest. Mike will speak and lead worship during the cruise. For more information or to register, call Educational Opportunities Tours at 800-247-0017 or www.eo.travel/rivercruises.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 6:30am Men-Brkfst Grp	2	3
4 8:45am Handbells 8:45am Education 9:30am Fellowship 10:00am Worship/ Communion 11:15am Welcomers Training	5	6 6:30pm Caregivers Support Group at Applewood Point	7 4:00pm SPRC Meeting w/District Superintendent 6:15pm SonRise Rehl 7pm Choir Rehearsal	8 6:30am Men-Brkfst Grp	9	10
11 8:45am Handbells 8:45am Education 9:30am Fellowship 10:00am Worship 11:15am Congregational Care	12	13	14 6:15pm SonRise Rehl 7pm Choir Rehearsal	15 Newsletter Deadline 6:30am Men-Brkfst Grp	16	17 9am-1pm Operation Christmas Child Distribution Processing Center
18 8:45am Handbells 8:45am Education 9:30am Fellowship 10:00am Worship/Children's Christmas Program & March to the Manger	19	20	21 6:15pm SonRise Rehl 7pm Choir Rehearsal & Choir Party	22 6:30am Men-Brkfst Grp	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 4:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
25 CHRISTMAS DAY 9:30am NO Coffee Fellowship 10:00am Worship	26	27	28 6:15pm NO SonRise Rehl 7pm NO Choir Rehearsal	29 6:30am Men-Brkfst Grp	30	31 NEW YEARS EVE

Portland Avenue United Methodist Church
8000 Portland Ave. S., Bloomington, MN 55420



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE EXPEDITE

Join us for worship on Sundays at 10:00 am
Sunday School (8:45 am) and Coffee Fellowship (9:30 am)

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