



EBENEZER

United Methodist Church

www.ebenezerum-church.org

December '18

Volume 14 Issue 12

Church's e-mail: ebenezerumc@yahoo.com

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Church Office Closed:

December 24-26 for
Christmas.

**Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!**

January 2019
newsletter items are due
by **Sunday, Dec. 17th.**



Christmas Thought by Ben Stein

My confession:

I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejeweled trees, Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are, Christmas trees.

It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away.

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from, that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat. Or maybe I can put it another way: where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities came from and where the America we knew went to....

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send 'jokes' through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and workplace. Are you laughing yet?

Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what God thinks of us. Pass this on if you think it has merit. If not, then just discard it.... no one will know you did. But, if you discard this thought process, don't sit back and complain about what bad shape the world is in.

My Best Regards, Honestly and respectfully,

—Ben Stein

(edited for length)

Sunday Services

- 9:00a Worship Service (Combined)
- 10:15a Sunday School
- 5:00p Adult Choir Practice
- 7:00p Every **FOURTH SUNDAY** United Methodist Women

WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

- 6:00p Praise Band Rehearsal
- 6:00p Teens for Christ (Gr. 6-12)
- 7:00p Bible Study—Children & Adults.



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Mon.—Friday: 8:30—1:00 p.m.

Phone: (828) 396-2214



Meetings, Etc.

Candlelight Service

We will worship our Savior and prepare for the celebration of his birth on Monday, December 24th at 6:00 p.m. Please join us.



United Methodist Women

The women will have their annual Christmas party/meeting on **Sunday, December 30th at 6:00 p.m.** The meeting will be held at Kim Ellis's home. Bring a \$10 wrapped gift to exchange and finger foods to share. Bleaka Hollar and Nancy Sears will be in charge of the program.



Special Giving

We gratefully acknowledge the following special gifts in *November*:

In Memory of Hoke Clark by:

Cleo Clark
Becky Clark

In Memory of Effie Hollar by:

Anonymous

In Memory of All Deceased Relatives and Friends by:

Bill, Delores, & Gary Paul Campbell

In Honor of Our Church Family by:

Bill, Delores, & Gary Paul Campbell

In Honor of Pastor Tomy & Patsy by:

JoAnn Knepp

In Honor of All Those Who Are Helping Our Church Get Out of Debt by:

Bill, Delores, & Gary Paul Campbell

In Honor of the Visitation Team by:

Bill, Delores, & Gary Paul Campbell

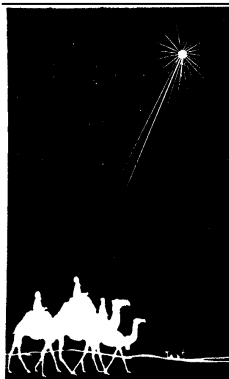


Something to Pray About by Cindy Sears

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from east of Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

--Matthew 2:1-2 KJV

HIS STAR



References: Matthew 2:1-12; video, His Star by Dr. Jason Lisle on youtube.com

God sent his son into the world right under the nose of Herod the Great, a wicked, despicable man. He, though not a Jew, bribed his way into the kingship of Judea under the Romans. Among other misdeeds, he had his wife and two sons executed. Bethlehem was only six miles from Jerusalem, and the fortress that Herod built as a safe getaway actually overlooked the city.

The wise men or magi were scholars and priests, and probably came from Persia (Babylon). They studied nature and astronomy, and contemplated on divine things. They were often counselors of kings. It is possible that they had been looking for a sign that a special king to the Jews would be born, because of the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel. Daniel was appointed to preside over the magicians of Babylon, and his teachings would have included Jewish scriptures and his prophecies. The wise men may have gotten a hint from Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17 that a star would announce this king's arrival on earth. Although they brought three gifts, there were probably more than three magi in the group. These people traveled with their own well-apportioned armies.

It is ironic that the Jews were not looking for the coming Messiah, but these pagan priests were. Yet, this was a sign of what was to come—the Jewish priests and most of the Jews would reject Jesus, and many gentiles would embrace Him.

The scripture says that the wise men followed the star, but they may have lost sight of it because of clouds or in the daytime; so they stopped at Jerusalem, which was in the general area where they had spotted the star, to ask for help. Why shouldn't the king of the Jews be born in the capital city? And no one among the Jews knew! Hearing what the wise men were saying, they should have been ecstatic about the news, but instead they were troubled. King Herod spoke with the wise men secretly after he found out where the birth was to take place, because he wanted to protect his position.

The star became visible for the wise men again and led them to the house in Bethlehem where Jesus, a toddler now, and his parents were staying. Subservient nations would often give tribute to a more powerful nation. Three common gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. So these gifts symbolize that the magi considered Jesus to be the King of kings.

Scholars, theologians, and historians, both Christian and non-Christian, have

(Continued on page 4)



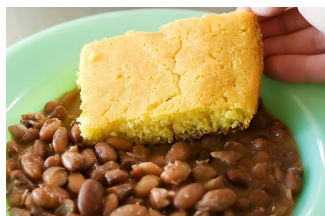
December Events & Fundraisers

Beans for Belize

**Saturday
December 1st
4-7:00 PM**

We will serve up a Poor Man's Supper on December 1st to raise funds for the upcoming mission trip to Belize. Menu includes: pinto beans, fried tators, slaw, cornbread, dessert, and beverage. We are requesting donations—you choose the amount.

We thank you for your support.



Hanging of the Greens

**Sunday
December 2nd
9:00 AM**

We invite you to our annual special worship service as we prepare ourselves and the church building for the Advent Season. Special programming includes our members and friends helping us decorate the Chrismon Tree. Come join the fun, and get in the mood for a good Christmas celebration of our Savior's birth!



December Celebrations

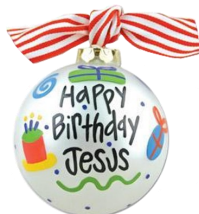


- 3rd—Justin Shoemake
- 4th—Shane Kelley
- 5th—Ellen Burns
- 5th—Teresa Simmons
- 7th—Jim Farr
- 10th—Abigail Mullinax
- 11th—Jeanette Eby
- 14th—Carla Yoder
- 14th—Patty Coffey
- 15th—Jerry Kohnle
- 20th—Peggy Jenkins
- 23rd—John McCrary
- 26th—Lyle Miller
- 26th—Pastor Tom Hunter
- 27th—Cheryl Vosdigh
- 28th—JoAnn Knepp

Christmas Play & Party

**Sunday
December 16th
5:00 PM**

With Tasha Haas's help, our children will be putting on a Christmas play this year. After the play, we invite you to stay for a birthday party for Jesus, our Savior. We will sing Christmas carols, and a special guest will be there, too!



Christmas Play Rehearsal

**Sundays at 5-6:00 PM
Nov. 4 to Dec. 9th**

Children and interested adults need to attend the rehearsals if they wish to participate in this year's Christmas play. The play will be performed on Sunday, December 16th with a birthday party for Jesus following the performance. See Tasha Haas for more information.

Christmas Shoe Boxes

Christmas Shoe Box Program

We'll be collecting the shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child program this year. Please begin buying items now. See the website for a list of acceptable items. A \$9 donation to offset shipping costs is requested. You can also pack boxes online at:

www.samaritanaspurse.org/occ

Please turn in by Sunday, December 16th.

Happy Anniversary!

- 3rd—Kenny & Laura Silver
- 13th—Shawn & Heather Wallace

Our Military

Nick Austin
Kyle Blair
Rick Garland
Trey Hefner
Shane McRary
Jamie Mullinax
Michael Potts
Hunter Tolbert
Josh Yount



Please pray for the men and women who protect our freedoms.

"People are like prisoners, trapped in the dungeon of their own moral folly, the victims of evil rather than the doers of it. They started out with freedom of choice, but they continued to choose the wrong thing."
--Leonard Griffith



Something, con't

attempted to find an historical affirmation of this guiding star. It seems odd that few people noticed it, including the Jews in Jerusalem. The word used, star, in the context at the time could have referred to a star or planet or comet. Some people have proposed a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Regulus (see the video for explanation) making a brighter "star" appear in the sky. But this is 2 stars and not one and the magi would have known about this. Another conjunction proposed is that between Jupiter and Venus, but that would only last for one night.

This special "star" seemed to lead the magi to the proper house, and stand over it while they were there. Since the earth rotates, this star would have to rotate at the same speed to stand still. There is no natural phenomenon that can remain stationary over one part of the earth for two years.

So, what was really going on? In that day's Greek, there was no word for "east." The word used in the Greek meant "at the rising." Since all things in the sky rise in the east and set in the west, translators assumed this meant the star rose in the east. But, since the Persians came from the east, it is entirely possible that this star rose in the west. It was probably not very bright, because no one seems to have noticed it. The fact that it rose in the west, would have confirmed to the magi that this was a supernatural occurrence.

What does this mean? First, we may need to modify our thinking a bit about God. Many people believe that God set the universe to running, and now lets it run on its own, except when God purposely intervenes to create a "miracle." But the Bible says that God is constantly upholding the universe and keeping it going. God is constantly causing the movement and stasis of the universe. Secular scientists do not have an explanation for why there is uniformity in the world. You cannot normally assume that just because it has always happened that way before that it will continue to happen that way (the sun rises and sets, gravity works, etc.). Natural laws reveal how God upholds the universe and life—they are a description of what God is doing—not something he has set in place permanently. God thinks mathematically, and his consistence helps us to make sense of the world, and use science to make things, and to make life easier. This is the miracle. So, it isn't the violation of natural laws that prove God exists, but the continuation of the laws of nature that prove God exist.

Therefore, God not only knows the future, He controls it completely; and it is not a problem for God to create a new supernatural phenomenon.

In Summary, Dr. Lisle posits the following about the Christmas star:

A supernatural light source

Not very bright, though it was bright enough to be seen from Persia

It rises over Christ

The Magi take many months to arrive in Bethlehem (1-2 years)

The "star" rose in the west (from perspective of Persia)

The "star" appears over Bethlehem.

If these things are a better explanation of the star of Bethlehem, it was a very special star. The question we need to ask ourselves is: are we looking for and happily anticipating Christ to return? Or are we more likely to be like the 1st Century Jews, and miss all the signs of His Coming?



Memory Tree

We will be setting up a Memory Tree again this year.

Forms will be available for you to fill-in whom you wish to honor or memorialize with a special *Gift for Christ* on December 23rd. Please turn in your forms before December 23rd, so that we can list the memorials and honorariums in the bulletin, and place an ornament on the Memory Tree with the person's name.

Gifts for Christ will go toward our Building Fund to help pay off the final \$27,000 we owe on the Christian Life Center mortgage.

We thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness.



How do I hide God's word in my heart? Memorize it!

I look into the future, and I see the nation of Israel. A king, like a bright star, will arise in that nation.

—Numbers 24:17a GNT



Church Council Minutes for November 18, 2018

Attendees: Pastor Tom Hunter, Ricky Baker, David & Sonya Crouse, Kim Ellis, Barbara Ferguson, Roy Hamby, Jo Nell Harrison, Bleaka Hollar, JoAnn Knepp, John McCrary, Judy McCrary, Marsha McCrary, Will McCrary, Phyllis Minton, Cindy Sears, Jimmy Stone, and Patty Coffey.

David Crouse called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He presented devotions from Psalms 95:2-3. He expressed the idea that we should thank God for God being Who He is, not just for the things He provides for us. He also read from 1st Chronicles 16:32. Then he thanked the Council members for being who we are, and for our service in 2018. Roy Hamby then opened the meeting with prayer.

The reading of the September minutes was approved as read with an update on the Christian Education Fellowship classes, which will not begin until January. The motion to approve was made by Sonya Crouse with a second by Tom.

Jo Nell Finance Report

Jo Nell Harrison reported that we have a good balance in the bank, and have paid all of our bills. We are catching up on the apportionments payments. The Lord's Supper Ministry is behind on some bills. Our Church will pay for this. There was general discussion about some other items.

We received notice that we now owe \$27,000 on the mortgage.

Old Business

The Hanging of the Greens will be on Dec. 2nd. Kim asked for some volunteers to set up the Crismon tree. The Praise Band was volunteered for the job.

The new sign is up at the crossroads, and has been used extensively. Unfortunately, some of the small signs that were put up in other places have been destroyed by vandals.

New Business

Kim Ellis said that we have a spot at the annual tree lighting in Granite

Falls. Ricky Baker gave the time that he would be working to prepare for this and asked for volunteers to help. Kim explained that she had some special decorations for our booth at this event.

Kim told us that we will have the Memory tree again this year. Forms will be available on December 2nd and onward for you to record your special gifts in honor or memory of loved ones. Please hold your donation until December 23rd when we will take up the Gifts for Christ offering.

Roy Hamby reported for the **Trustees**: We have hired Linda Moretz to clean the church. The inside kitchen door has cracked further and will need to be replaced. They are looking at replacement possibilities. Some discussion followed.

Work is continuing on the cemetery headstones, which should be finished soon.

Staff Pastor Parish Relations
Committee Report: Ricky Baker said that the pastor's evaluation has been complete and will be sent to the conference this week.

Bleaka Hollar announced that there will be no biscuit sales in December.

The **UMW** reported that they made about \$2700 with the Country Store. They are helping 7 children with Christmas gifts, and purchasing poinsettias for our shut-ins.

John McCrary reported that the **UMM** are working on several projects now.

Pastor Tom: Talked about Scott Volz, from the Gideons who spoke at our church today. Volz is also ramrodding the Christian Fellowship Club. He praised our church service and the spirit in our church, and our members gave \$200 to the Gideons to help with their Bible distribution ministry.

Pastor Tom reported that the Confirmation class is going well. He is working on ideas for Christmas Eve. He may request help for the United Methodist Men, because of all they are doing.

Tom spoke about feedback from the Conference, and the upcoming special General Conference in February 2019. We don't really know what will

happen, please continue to be in prayer for our church and the UMC.

Ricky Baker reported on the 3rd Saturday meals. He said that we are not making much money on the meals. He will be stepping down from this. If we want to continue, someone else will have to step up to do it. There was some general discussion. We will consider what to do next year. We were going to stop the meals in November this time anyway.

Sonya said we have enough counters to keep two people from doing it most of the time.

Motion was made to adjourn, which passed. Meeting adjourned.

--minutes by Cindy Sears 📄

Moral Conscience

Yet it was around 1962 that the British revivalist Leonard Ravenhill wrote, "The world has lost the power to blush over its vice; the Church has lost her power to weep over it."

And that brings us back to the question of how we can awake our moral conscience when we are virtually comatose.

Surely, it is not primarily by trying to shame "the world" – by which I mean those who do not identify as Bible-believing, God-fearing people.

Rather, it is primarily by awakening our own consciences as believers, by rekindling our own sensitivities, by putting away all the unclean and defiling forms of entertainment that flood our lives, by spending time in prayerful meditation.

Then, as our lights shine brighter, we can illuminate and convict a darkened world. Let the awakening start with you and with me.

--Michael Brown on
Townhall.com



Ebenezer United Methodist Church Committees – 2019

Pastor	Tom Hunter
Church Lay Leader	Bleaka Hollar
Chair of Finance Committee/Financial Secretary	JoNell Harrison
Chair of Church Council	David Crouse
Financial Secretary Assistant	JoAnn Knepp
Chair of Nurture Ministries (Education, Worship & Stewardship)	Kim Ellis
Chair of Outreach Ministries (Missions, Volunteer Ministries)	Candace Collins
Chair of Witness (Evangelism & Church Growth)	Barbara Ferguson
Superintendent of Church School	Marsha McRary
Membership Secretary	Kim Ellis
President of United Methodist Women	Kim Ellis
President of United Methodist Men	John McCrary
Youth Representative to Church Council	
Delegate to Annual Conference	Kim Ellis
Alternate to Annual Conference	Cindy Sears
Representatives to SCCM	Judy McCrary; Barbara Ferguson
Church Treasurer/Coordinator of Communications	Cindy Sears
UMYF Coordinators	Jason & Candace Collins; Jimmy Stone
Church Historians	Cindy Sears
Communion Steward	Sonya Crouse, Peggy Jenkins (Assistant)
Chair of Trustees	Roy Hamby
Chair Staff/Pastor Parish	Ricky Baker



NOTE: Finance Committee members are the same for 2019 as for 2018.

Members at Large to Church Council

2019	2020	2021
Seth McCrary	Phyllis Minton	Patty Coffey
Chris Haas	Will McCrary	Jim Farr
Wyll Baker		Jerry Kohnle

Nominations and Personnel: Tom Hunter (Chair) + Bleaka Hollar (Lay Leader)

2018	2019	2021
Cinda McCrary	Linda Moretz	Judy McCrary
Kim Knepp	Wayne Ellis	Sonya Crouse
Will McCrary	Gary Minton	Tammy Adams

Trustees

2019	2020	2021
Roy Hamby(C)	Loretta Helton	Billy Long
Garry Minton	Linda Moretz	Barbara Ferguson
Sarah Adams	Gerald Frye	
Dawn Yount		

SPPR Committee - + Kim Ellis; Bleaka Hollar

2019	2020	2021
Ricky Baker(C)	Will McCrary	John McCrary
Jimmy Stone	JoAnn Knepp	Phyllis Minton
	Kirk Austin	

Audit Committee + Bleaka Hollar, Jo Nell Harrison, JoAnn Knepp & Cindy Sears

2019	2020	2021
Heather Stone	Irene Austin	Will McCrary

Cemetery Committee – All Trustees, plus Gerald Frye & Jerry Kohnle



December 2018

EBENEZER UMC
Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>Every Sunday:</i> 9:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Sunday school 5:00 PM Adult Choir</p>						<p>1 <i>Poor Man's Supper for Belize—4-7 PM, see p. 3</i></p>
<p>2 <i>Hanging of the Greens—9 AM, see p. 3</i> 3 <i>Play Rehearsal—5-6 PM</i></p>	<p>3 Basketball—7 PM</p>	<p>4 Seniors Go Visiting—9:30 AM Volleyball—7 PM</p>	<p>5 6 PM Praise Band 6 PM <i>Teens for Christ</i> 7 PM Children and Adult Bible studies</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 <i>Private Party—11-4 PM</i></p>
<p>9 <i>Play Rehearsal—5-6 PM</i></p>	<p>10 Basketball—7 PM</p>	<p>11 Volleyball—7 PM</p>	<p>12 6 PM Praise Band 6 PM <i>Teens for Christ</i> 7 PM Children and Adult Bible studies</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>16 <i>Christmas Play and Party, 5 PM, see p. 3</i></p>	<p>17 Basketball—7 PM</p>	<p>18 Seniors Go Visiting—9:30 AM Volleyball—7 PM</p>	<p>19 6 PM Praise Band 6 PM <i>Teens for Christ</i> 7 PM Children and Adult Bible studies</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 <i>Christmas Shoe Boxes due in</i></p>	<p>22 <i>Private Party—1-3 PM</i></p>
<p>23 <i>Private Party—1-6 PM</i></p>	<p>24 <i>Candlelight Service—6 PM, see p. 2</i></p>	<p>Merry Christmas CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27 </p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29 <i>Private Party—5-8 PM (12-9 PM)</i></p>
<p>30 <i>UMW Holiday Party—6 PM, see p. 2</i></p>	<p>31 Basketball—7 PM</p>					



Ebenezer United Methodist Church

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.