

Life at Cokesbury

December 23, 2019 - January 6, 2020

Longing for Home

“What do you long for?” I got a wide array of answers: peace, kindness, warmth, inclusion, freedom. One answer was: “I already have shelter and food, so I don’t really need any more things.” The most striking, however, was the word “home”. Maybe that’s what we all long for in the deep parts of our souls. We long to be accepted, included, respected, and loved. I feel that longing, myself, all the time. What do you long for?

Christmas Eve is a night when we can bask in the amber glow of candles and Christmas trees, when the comforting smells and joyous sounds ring in our ear. For some, however, the night can bring lots of complications, confusion, and even pain. Maybe that’s because the prevalent expectations of happiness make the contrast with the actual isolation, grief, and struggle feel even worse. For some, Christmas Eve might be a painful reminder of what’s been lost or denied. Without a loving community, a loving home-like gathering, few other nights can make a person feel disconnected as badly. Sometimes we long for something we can’t even name.

That’s why we share Christmas Eve together with the re-telling of the story of the birth of Jesus, singing carols, sharing Communion, and lighting a room full of candles. In fact, lighting those candles together is a uniquely moving experience for me because it means that we are together no matter how alone we might feel, no matter how saddened or fearful for our world, no matter how heart-broken we are. That moment when we light one another’s candles and together lift their light above us, we are connected. As one community, made up of a bunch of individuals with a bunch of different needs and desires, we shine light together into the void the world still feels. Together we create a moment of home, hopefully a moment when our longings are fulfilled.

On Christmas Eve, we will remember the birth of Christ as a community, as a family. It’s the night that we celebrate God’s intention that Christ is everywhere waiting to be born. In my heart, I will give thanks that Cokesbury is a home for me where I’ve got new friends. We journey together, as shepherds and wise ones, drawn to Christ seeking a home here in this world. Christ longs for us and He fills our every longing – He is our home. May Christ find us ready to make him at home when we are together and for all who join us.

Merry Christmas! May you be at peace in this holy season.

Jonathan

Calendar

- Christmas Eve Services will be 5:30 and 11:00 p.m.
- The office will be closed Dec. 24 & 25. (Joan will be out of the office until Jan. 7.)
- Wesley Covenant Renewal Service is Jan. 5.
- Worship Leadership Training will be Jan. 6 at 6:30 p.m.
- Circle Rachel meets Jan. 6 at 6:00 p.m. at the Metro Diner in Matthews
- Circle Sarah meets Jan. 8 at 10:00 a.m.
- The Trustees meet Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m.
- Room in the Inn is each Saturday at 5:00 p.m.
- Renewal of Baptism Service & Installation of Church Leadership is Sunday, Jan. 12.
- Ministry Board meeting is Monday, Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m. in the UMAR Classroom.

Volunteer Needed

We need one volunteer to assist with keeping the nursery at the 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service. Time commitment is from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Let Pastor Jonathan or Marta Cox know if you can serve your church and possible visitors in this way.

Christmas Eve Services: 5:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

The 5:30 p.m. service will be a more informal service with more contemporary music and less traditionally styled music. It's a service where (grand)parents should not feel uncomfortable about their children interrupting. Everyone should feel at ease and relaxed. The 11:00 p.m. is a service of contemplation. The service will feature numerous readings and songs from the Chancel Choir. Both services will feature Communion, candle lighting, and joining in singing favorite Christmas carols.

January 5: Covenant Renewal Service at 10:45 a.m. service

As we begin the new year, we will join in an old service based on the one that John Wesley, founder of Methodism, used with the earliest Methodist societies. The center of the service is the Covenant Prayer, which is an act of surrender to God, while at the same time offering our best to the service of Christ in the world. This is a service of commitment, re-commitment, and self-reflection.

January 5: Bring your visions, dreams, and ideas about the emerging direction of the Cokesbury congregation. Everyone will be handed a card upon entering the sanctuary for the Covenant Renewal Service at 10:45. You are invited to write your vision for the church on that card and present it to the altar rail after you receive Communion.

Special Offering for Christmas Eve

At tonight's Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, we will collect a special offering to benefit Urban Ministries in Charlotte. Urban Ministries meets numerous needs in our city: assisting persons and finding adequate housing, providing shelter and meals for homeless persons, winter clothing, Room in the Inn, and numerous education programs. This year the Men's Shelter is undergoing a renovation in order to accommodate their expanding services. The mission of Urban Ministries is to end homelessness, but they are deeply attentive to the current suffering of homelessness.

Worship Leader Training

There will be training for those of you interested in becoming a worship leader on Monday, January 6, at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. You will become familiar with the procedure and the use of the microphone.

Music at Cokesbury

Finder's Keepers/Still Standing (Barbershop Quartets) will be here Thursday, January 16 at 7:00 p.m. A hot dog supper begins at 6:00 p.m. for only \$4.00.

AutoBell Car Wash Gift Cards

The UMYF will be selling AutoBell Car Wash Gift Cards for \$20. Half of the money will go to the UMYF account and will fund the programs throughout the year. For more information, see Ann Lake.

Thank You! from the United Methodist Men

On Saturday, December 14, we hosted the Bethlehem Center Birthday Party for Jesus for 26 children and 3 staff members. Thank you to those who contributed funds to make this event possible, to those who coordinated the event with Family Dollar, to those who helped as the children's personal shoppers, to those who organized the wrapping materials and supplies, to those who helped the children wrap their presents, to those who bought or supplied items and made up the goodie bags for the children, to those who got the pizzas and the rest of the food and drink items, to Pastor Jonathan for conducting a story session for the children, to Santa for showing up, and to those who took pictures and delivered them to the Bethlehem Center. This is a wonderful mission project that continues to be a joy for Cokesbury and the children and staff from the Bethlehem Center.