

EVERYTHING (ALMOST) YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS EVE

By Ken Garfield

Here's a nuts-and-bolts story to help you navigate the joyful, if uber-busy, gathering of the faithful on Christmas Eve. *The Cornerstone* is dispensing with its usual inspirational story and getting down to cases, in hopes of making December 24 at Myers Park United Methodist Church as smooth and beautiful as possible...

- First things first, there are six services to choose from – 1:00, 3:00, 4:30, 6:00, 8:00 and 11:00 p.m. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter (in two places, in fact) and at www.myersparkumc.org. No two services are alike in music, tone and style, so choose the one that most touches your heart (and fits in with your family dinner schedule). By all means, come to two (or more). Many love the splendor of the 11:00 p.m. service, and the solemn quiet that prevails before the din of Christmas morning.

- From Dr. Howell, on saving seats on Christmas Eve: “As a courtesy to your fellow worshippers, we are asking that no more than one, or two at the most, seats be saved. We can understand someone parking the car, or a disabled person in physical need. But claiming a whole row an hour or more before the service for some who come in last minute isn’t in the spirit of Christmas with respect to others who come far earlier and can’t get in the Sanctuary, many of whom have physical challenges.”
- Arrive early so you can grab a parking spot with ease. If you’re parking on a residential street, please get as close to the curb as you can. Enjoy a leisurely stroll to worship. Once seated, savor the chance to clear your head.
- If you find the Sanctuary full, you can enjoy the service via video in Francis Chapel or Jubilee Hall.

Continued Inside...

A Conversation on Faith

THE JOY AND THE SORROW

On a recent Saturday, I put on a beard and extra padding, if you get my drift, and listened to kids place their Christmas order. The next day, I sat in our Sanctuary and watched parents light a candle for a child who died too soon. The joy and sorrow of the season, reminding us that life brings both.



Ken Garfield

Spoiler alert. This is the second Christmas that my wife has “employed” me at her shop. Talk about character acting, a bar mitzvah boy playing The Big Guy! I embrace the innocence

that comes with listening to kids ask for Legos. I’ve even gotten good at keeping the fidgeting (the child’s and mine) to a minimum as mom and dad snap pictures.

The next day, I embraced in a different sort of way the grief that fills KinderMourn’s holiday memorial service for bereaved

parents and other loved ones. Our church was honored to host this season’s gathering. Church member Meg McElwain, who lost a son, and Dr. Howell offered the comfort of their counsel. My pal, Liam Broughton, age 16, offered what warmth he could, playing *Amazing Grace* on the bagpipes as we walked back out into the cold of the season. From my seat to the side, I watched a young father alternate between weeping and smiling softly at his wife beside him. He’d appear to be fine for a moment. Then, suddenly, his head would drop and the tears would come again. If only their child could have lived...

That’s the image I’ll take into Christmas and the new year, the burden that this man and so many others carry through life, a burden that challenges each one of us to look toward the shadows, to those who need us. The joy and the sorrow of the season, calling us to listen for the sobs amid the revelry.

Director of Communications Ken Garfield writes about church life.



MYERS PARK
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SNAPSHOTS

The calendar of Advent opportunities is inside today’s *Cornerstone* and at www.myersparkumc.org, including our schedule of six Christmas Eve services: 1:00 p.m. Jazz Service in Jubilee Hall, 3:00 p.m. Carols & Candlelight service in the Sanctuary, 4:30 p.m. Celebration contemporary service in Jubilee Hall, 6:00 p.m. Carols & Candlelight service in the Sanctuary, 8:00 p.m. Candlelight & Holy Communion service in the Sanctuary and 11:00 p.m. Candlelight & Holy Communion service in the Sanctuary. Merry Christmas.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sanctuary services
8:30, 9:45, 11:00 a.m.

Church In The Round
8:45 a.m., Jubilee Hall.

Holy Communion
9:30 a.m., Chapel.

Sunday School
9:45 a.m.



In Memory

The sympathy of the ministers and members is extended to:

The Families Of...

Edith M. White, mother of Barbara McKay and grandmother of Michael Stutts, who died on November 26, 2016. *Grace Weeks Cummings*, mother of Diane Walsh, who died on December 4, 2016.

Babies

Jackson Graham Boothe, son of Melissa and Brandon Boothe and brother of Ellie Boothe, born on November 26, 2016. *Mervin Dixon Crum*, son of Jessica and Mark Crum, brother of Griffin Crum and grandson of Dixon and Barbara Crum, born on December 5, 2016.

Weddings

Terah Taylor and Andrew Lakin, married on December 10, 2016, at the church.



All who have not done so are encouraged to fill out and return their Estimate of Giving card to support the work of the church in the world in 2017. Cards can be placed in the Sunday offering plate, dropped off at the front desk in the lobby of the Parish Life Building or mailed to 1501 Queens Road, Charlotte, NC 28207. Commitments to the #GiveDifferently campaign can also be made at www.myersparkumc.org/give. In

addition to supporting the church operating budget, support is encouraged for the *Jubilee Plus!* second-mile fund for outreach. The goal is \$1 million. Have a question about stewardship? Reach Executive Director Saribeth Dozier at 704-295-4844 or saribeth@mpumc.org. Look soon in the mail and around the campus for a full-color magazine celebrating a year of extraordinary of missions at Myers Park United Methodist.

'KIDS VERY HAPPY TO SEE FIRST FRESH CHRISTMAS TREES'

The annual happening that is our church youth selling Christmas trees, garlands and wreaths took on an especially poignant turn this season. Rachel Humphries of Refugee Support Services shared this note of thanks from a family that got its Christmas tree from Myers Park United Methodist Church. Church youth treated four refugee families to an evening of chicken fingers and fun as they picked out their trees. Refugee Support Services is one of many ministries supported by *Jubilee Plus!* Youth Ministries, by the way, is still tallying up how the sale went. The project supports youth missions and ministries. Stay tuned for details.

"Thank you so very much for beautiful pictures and everything today. Kids very happy to see first fresh Christmas trees. It's huge but they love it. You are blessing to us. May God bless you and your family with abundantly love. We got to meet nice, kindness and loving people there. Specially thanks to you how great you have loving us so much. Don't know what else to say beside thank you. I am humbly honor for all you done. We love the foods and Christmas tree ♥"



Our friends and their first fresh Christmas tree.

Each issue of the Cornerstone offers a bonus page of programs, classes and other activities offering the faithful a chance to learn, serve and grow. To share news for The Life Of The Church, reach Director of Communications Ken Garfield at 704-295-4819 or ken@mpumc.org.



The Advent Journey...

Continued From Other Side....

MONDAY AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26-27

- Church closed. Call 704-376-8584 to follow the prompts to the pastor on call.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

- 8:45, 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. combined contemporary/traditional services in the Sanctuary. No nursery or worship care.

MONDAY, JANUARY 2

- Church closed. Call 704-376-8584 to follow the prompts to the pastor on call.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

- 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Epiphany Party for Grades K-2. Donations of baby items go to Florence Crittenton Services.

THIS AND THAT

- Children's Ministries' devotional, *God's Love is Given Birth!*, with prayers and children's artwork, is around campus. One per family, please.
- The Goodness Gracious! gift shop in the Parish Life lobby will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday, December 17. Sales support outreach.
- Good to know during the busy Advent season: The Sunday shuttle bus runs continuously from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. between the church and Myers Park Traditional at 2132 Radcliffe Avenue.

*Scenes from the season (so far): Christmas concerts, the Youth Christmas Tree Sale and Breakfast With Mary
Photos by Lisa Howell, Jason Rhymer and Katharine Willis.*





*Scenes from the season (so far): Breakfast With Mary, the Youth Christmas Tree Sale and the Christmas concerts.
Photos by Katharine Willis, Lisa Howell and Kathryn Melton.*

The Advent Journey

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

- 11:00 a.m., restorative yoga with candlelight with Dr. Melanie Dobson in Room 031 in the Snyder Building. Open to all. Details: 704-295-4840 or melanie@mpumc.org.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

- 8:30, 9:45 and 11:00 a.m., *Lessons and Carols* in the Sanctuary.
- 8:45 a.m., Church In The Round in Jubilee Hall, *Christmas In Word & Song: A Contemporary Service of Lessons & Carols*.
- 6:00 p.m., Moravian Love Feast in the Sanctuary with buns, spiced tea, beeswax candles and music.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

- 10:30 a.m., Adults Plus! hosts *A Sinatra Christmas Experience* with entertainer Francis Nazarro. Christmas lunch (turkey and dressing and more) follows at noon for \$5. All ages are welcome. For reservations by noon December 20, call 704-376-5520 (option two) or e-mail cmull@mpumc.org.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

- 11:00 a.m., restorative yoga with candlelight with Dr. Melanie Dobson in Room 031 in the Snyder Building. Open to all. Details: 704-295-4840 or melanie@mpumc.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

- 1:00 p.m., Jazz service in Jubilee Hall.
- 3:00 p.m. Carols & Candlelight service with a Nativity tableau in the Sanctuary.
- 4:30 p.m., Celebration contemporary service in Jubilee Hall with Church In The Round band and leaders.
- 6:00 p.m., Carols & Candlelight with a Nativity tableau in the Sanctuary.
- 8:00 p.m., Candlelight & Holy Communion in the Sanctuary.
- 11:00 p.m., Candlelight & Holy Communion in the Sanctuary.
- The 6:00, 8:00 and 11:00 p.m. services will be livestreamed at www.myersparkumc.org.
- No nursery or worship care on Christmas Eve.
- The Christmas Eve offering will go to our Sedgfield Elementary and Middle school partnerships, and partners in Haiti. Make out a check to the church with *Christmas Eve offering* on the memo line.
- Worshipers are encouraged to drop off food items for Loaves & Fishes in the Parish Life lobby bin.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

- 11:00 a.m., one service in the Sanctuary. No nursery or worship care.

Continued On Other Side...



FOCUS OF SERIES IN EARLY 2017: RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AND OTHERS

In pursuit of racial reconciliation, the church partnered with Charlotte's Molly Barker and the Red Boot Coalition to show the 2016 documentary, "13th," then talk about the issues it raises. Ron Knape reflects on the film.

"Visible signs of disbelief were on full display in Francis Chapel as we watched this Netflix documentary on race, the criminal justice system and mass incarceration in America. The film's title is drawn from our Constitution's 13th Amendment, outlawing the peculiar institution that was slavery *except as punishment for crime*. The impact of "13th" was disturbing, due to the soaring rate of black male incarceration that flashed across the screen and staggered the mind. But the power of this film is not in statistics. It's in the raw inequity that it exposes, like that of a young black man, slight of build, wrongfully charged, refusing to bow to a plea bargain, imprisoned and beaten for three years by inmates and guards, released only to take his own life two years later.

"How to watch this and not be moved?"

"Here's a challenge and an opportunity: Don't watch this remarkable film on your own. E-mail me at ronknape@icloud.com with "13th" as the subject line. We'll watch it together and talk about it. Then you can make up your mind about joining our racial reconciliation group or one of the social justice initiatives launched by Dr. Howell. It's no cliché to say you can make a difference, in someone else's life and your own."

Here are details on Dr. Howell's upcoming series, "Reconciliation With God And Others."

- Monday, January 9, at 7:00 p.m. in Jubilee Hall, Dr. Howell and guests will share **Favorite Bible Stories About Healing, Forgiveness And Reconciliation**, with reflection on why they matter today and can be transformative.
- Tuesday, January 17, at 7:00 p.m. in Jubilee Hall, Rev. Brenda Tapia, who founded Davidson College's Love of Learning program, will lead **Everything You Wanted To Know About Black People But Were Afraid To Ask**. She'll answer anonymous questions theologically, and with good humor.



- Monday, January 30, at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, January 31, at 11:00 a.m. in Francis Chapel, Rev. Matt Rawle, author of *The Faith of a Mockingbird* and other books, will talk about Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This is the first in a series that Dr. Howell is calling the **Pastor's Book Club**. Each month, we will have a book you can read, followed at month's end with discussion.
- Sunday, February 12, at 4:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, Dr. Howell will converse with D'Walla Simmons Burke on **Black Spirituals**, their origin and social and theological meaning. The Winston-Salem State choir will sing spirituals for us.
- Wednesday, February 15, at 7:00 p.m. in Jubilee Hall or the Sanctuary, New Testament scholar Dr. Ben Witherington will teach on **Paul's Doctrine of Reconciliation**.
- Monday, February 27, at 7:00 p.m. in Jubilee Hall, Dr. Christena Cleveland of Duke Divinity School will share her perspective as a sociologist and theologian on **Why We Suffer Divisions In The Church, And How We Might Come Together As One Body**.

The programs with Rev. Matt Rawle and Dr. Christena Cleveland are sponsored by the Snyder-Fisher-Fellowship Sunday School class.

EVERYTHING (ALMOST) YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS EVE...

Continued From Front...

- Ushers and others will help you get where you are going. Overflow will include candles, singing and worship leaders.
- A chance to do more than sing on Christmas Eve: Bring canned goods and other items for Loaves & Fishes. Donations go in the Parish Life lobby bin. The Christmas Eve offering goes to our Sedgefield Elementary and Middle schools partnership, and our partners in Haiti.

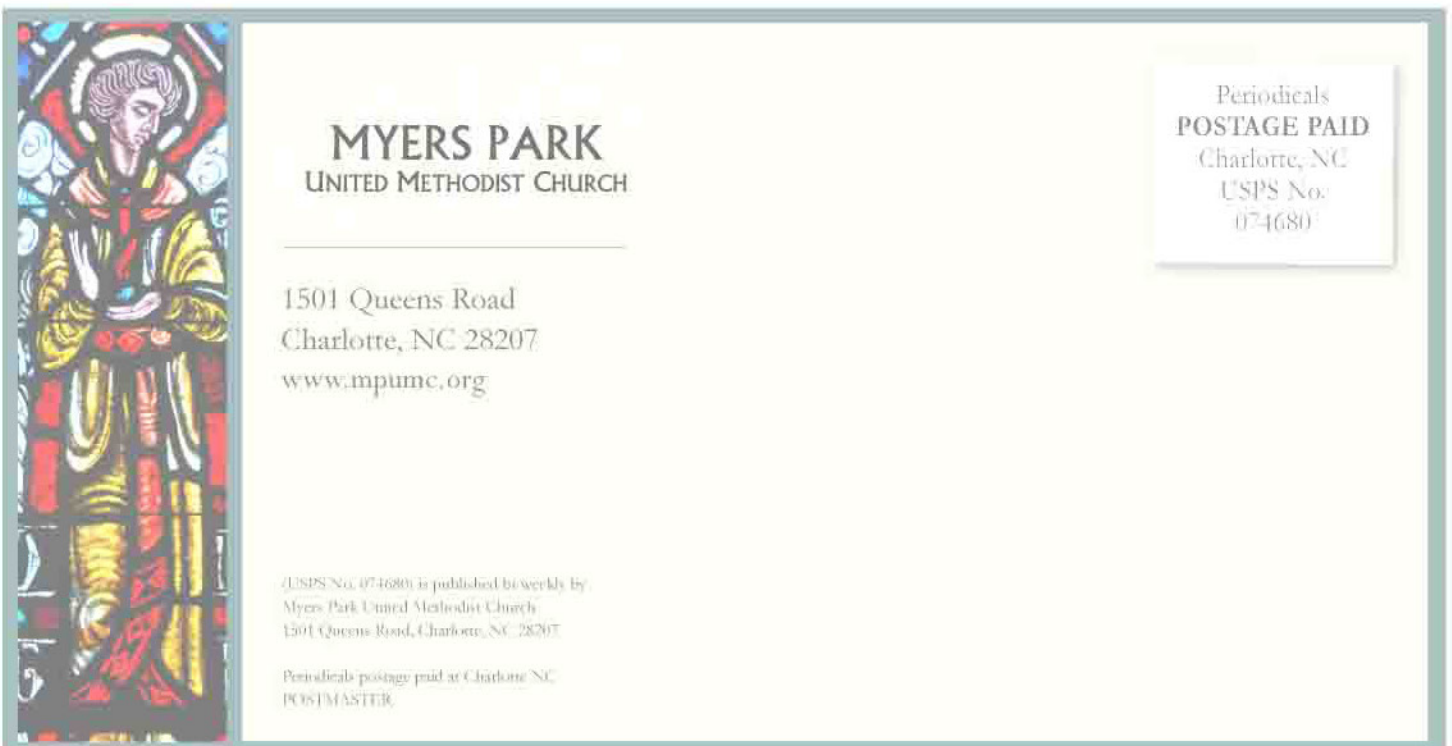
Make out a check to the church with *Christmas Eve offering* in the memo line.

- Can't get to church? You can watch the 6:00, 8:00 and 11:00 p.m. services live at www.myersparkumc.org.

Merry Christmas.

END OF YEAR GIVING, THE 100K DREAM

- Regarding end-of-year giving: If you can make a contribution to the work of the church or fulfill your pledge, please know that your gift matters. Contributions must be received by the church or postmarked by December 31, 2016. Checks can be placed in the offering plate or dropped off at the church by noon on December 30. Mail checks to 1501 Queens Road, Charlotte, NC 28207. Giving may also be done at www.myersparkumc.org/give. Details: Executive Director Saribeth Dozier at 704-295-4844 or saribeth@mpumc.org.
- A spaghetti dinner at 6:00 p.m. Monday, January 23, in Jubilee Hall will introduce *The 100K Dream* – a project challenging us to deepen relationships with the Charlotte community and beyond in 2017 by devoting 100,000 hours of service in ministry to others. The dinner is \$5, payable at the door. Make a reservation by January 13 at 100kdream@mpumc.org. Look for a story on the project in a special magazine celebrating missions at Myers Park United Methodist, and in *the Cornerstone* after the holidays.
- *The Cornerstone* appreciates all church youth who play sports at any level. A special shout-out to the Myers Park High football team, which finished 11-2, including a thrilling overtime loss to Vance in the state playoffs. A high five to all the players, including those with ties to our congregation: Jack Davidson, Garland Greenway, Ethan Shipp, Connor Shulstad, Crawford White and Geyer Withers. The Mustangs plan to hold their end-of-year banquet in Jubilee Hall.



MISSION HAITI, COSTA RICA, ARMENIA

- Give the gift of missions this season while considering three world mission opportunities: A team will travel to **Bayonnais, Haiti March 8-15** to help with educational, medical and construction needs with mission partner OFCB and its surrounding community. Details: Steve Breckenridge at 704-231-1138 or sbreckenridge@carolina.rr.com or Sandy Hieronymus at 704-545-6910 or sandyh46@aol.com. Join the team headed to **Costa Rica April 8-15** to work with missionary Wil Bailey. Reach Thom Sumner at 704-962-6091 or thomsum@bellsouth.net. A trip is planned **August 12-24 to Berdzor in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia**, to work with Project AGAPE. A meeting to learn more will be at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 11, in Room 103 of the Parish Life Building. Reach Jack Hankins at jchankins24@gmail.com or Lynn Hankins at lynnhankins@gmail.com. For more on world and local missions, visit www.myersparkumc.org/serve.
- A sweet note from Refugee Support Services to the Garden Ministry that grows the goodies beside the Parish Life parking lot: "Thank you all so very much for the pounds and pounds of vegetables you have provided for our newest community members. From the tilling of the ground, the planting of the seeds, the harvesting of the fruit and the sharing of the harvest, your love is evident – and our refugee friends feel that... Thank you all for the part you play in helping this community feel welcomed and feel at home."
- And another from Charlotte Family Housing Executive Director Stephen L. Smith, thanking the church for its recent donation: "Wow!! Just blown away by your generosity! Your gift is such a blessing to the families we serve! I'm humbled, grateful and we pledge to be great stewards of the gift."