

PASTOR'S PAGE



I have a lot of pictures on my phone. I have a few pictures of my grandchildren, but there are many more of creatures that I love – fish. If you don't know it by now, I love to fish. When it comes to vacations for me, it's not a vacation unless fishing is part of it. It's been a while since I've gone on a fishing trip and contrary to what my wife may believe, I think I'm overdue.

After having gone on a few fishing trips, I've learned the importance of preparation, especially if you're going to a remote area. Inadequate preparation can really diminish the joy of the experience, and sometimes can even place a fisherman in real peril. However, good preparation increases the potential for a more meaningful and memorable experience.

The word "Advent" comes from the Latin word "adventus" meaning "coming" or "visit". The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. During Advent, we prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah, and embrace our own longing and need of forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

The season of Advent was established in the fourth century, although it has not been a part of the liturgical observance of all denominations and churches. With the mixing of Christmas and Advent during the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, there is often confusion between the two. I have learned that people expect Christmas carols from the first Sunday of Advent even though it is not totally appropriate.

Some churches today are experimenting with incorporating Advent themes and symbols in worship during the weeks prior to the actual start of Advent in the hope of avoiding the conflict of Advent versus Christmas observance during the immediate weeks prior to Christmas. In doing this we further diminish the significance of Advent.

Thanksgiving Day in the United States signals the beginning of the more secular aspects of preparation for Christmas. In my lifetime, I've seen the emphasis of Advent significantly give way to the more secular aspects of preparation for Christmas. It is ironic that at the same time we are supposed to begin the Advent season of spiritual preparation for Christmas we become totally absorbed in the secular aspects of Christmas.

Advent begins on December 2nd and will span four Sundays. Each Sunday we will acknowledge the prescribed theme and light a candle: "Hope" on week one, "Peace" for week two, then "Joy" in week three, and "Love" for week four. This is meant to help to prepare us spiritually for Christmas as we rush about making all sorts of other preparations.

Please join us for Sunday services throughout Advent and one of our services on Christmas Eve. In addition, on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm Pastor Mike will lead an Advent study in room 100 beginning on November 27th. Monica Swank is also offering Advent devotional guides to anyone who would like them.

I began this letter by emphasizing how important preparation was to the fishing trips that I've taken in my life. As much as I love fishing, there are more important things than fishing (but not very many). However, I think that the thing my fishing trips and Christmas have in common is that proper preparation can make all the difference in the world.

Let our church help you be spiritually prepared for Christmas with the events and resources we offer. If you're looking for hope, peace, joy, and love this Christmas season, look to God and you will find it.

Blessings,
Pastor Mike



SUMC Grace Points

December 2018

WORSHIP:

- All three services will come together for one service in the multipurpose room on Sunday, December 9th at 9:30 a.m. This will be a morning of worship, music, singing, fellowship, and joy as all our music ministries lift their voices in celebration of the birth of Christ.
- Christmas Eve services will be at 6:00 pm in the MPR and 9:00 pm in the sanctuary on December 24.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

- The first semester of Crossroads Sunday School ended November 18th. The second semester begins January 6th. There will be no Crossroads Sunday school between Christmas and New Year's Day.
- There will be no children's activities on Thanksgiving weekend, but childcare will be offered during worship to children up through 1st grade.
- Winter Storytime will be introduced for all kids up through 2nd grade during the 9:30 service.
- There will be a unified service on December 9th featuring all of the Choirs including Cherubs and Kids of the Kingdom.
- Parents' Time Out is Sunday December 2nd. Parents may drop kids off at church to enjoy activities and make a gift for the parents. Sign up now!
- Breakfast with Santa is Saturday, December 1st, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. This year pictures with Santa Clause will be taken upstairs in the parlor at assigned times to alleviate congestion.
- Coming in January, we look forward to a new outreach concert called Cabin Fever Music Jam. We will serve soup and sandwiches and there will be lot of fun and activities for everyone.

YOUTH MINISTRY:

- Our youth joined other youth from East Ohio Conference to participate in Project Feed to pack over 75,000 meals.
- The youth band "Lights" is excited to share our Thanksgiving worship with the congregation through our Facebook page, and looks forward to bringing our talents to a Sunday Morning worship very soon.
- Our youth are looking forward to helping with Breakfast with Santa and Parents' Time Out.
- The youth will meet on Thursday evenings with worship at 7:00 and on Sundays at 10:40 a.m. for Bible study and 6:00 p.m. for youth group.
- SUMTeens will celebrate at the end of the month with a Christmas Party and caroling!

ADULT MINISTRY/OUTREACH:

- Hanging of the Greens is Monday November 26th at 6 p.m. Join us for pizza at 6 then help make our church ready for the Christmas season. Removal of Greens is January 7th at 6pm. This is a joyous time and many hands are needed for this work. Please consider joining us for these events.
- The Advent study "Lifesong: The Melody of You Heart" led by Pastor Mike will begin on November 27th at 7:00 p.m. in room 100.
- Disciple 2 class will begin in January along with several other studies.
- A new casual meeting has begun during the kids' choir times on Thursdays. "The Gathering" is a time of relaxing and refreshing for the remainder of the week. This follows the Joyful Noise and Cherubs' practice schedule and anyone is welcome to join.
- The Giving Tree is a great way to bring joy to someone else this year. There are still tags on the tree that need a donor for Christmas. All items are needed by Dec. 2nd in order to be delivered to the children and families in time.