



BEAVER BLESSINGS

December 2023



RECONCILING MINISTRIES NETWORK

"Welcoming all with God's love, serving all in God's name as we all grow in faith together"

Beaver Memorial United Methodist Church · 42 South 3rd Street · Lewisburg · PA · 17837

www.beavermethodist.org · (570)524-0809



Sunday Morning Worship Services - 10:30 am
New Beginnings Adult Sunday School Class – 9:00 am

From Pastor Sue's Desk:

One of my Seminary classmates, Rev. Mike Smith, recently wrote a piece about what is happening in the Middle East, including some Biblical context. He titled it: Don't Be a Samson. I share an edited version of it as I believe it contains good information and wisdom.

Not every character in the Bible is a good role model. We know that we should boo the Devil, Judas, Goliath, King Herod, Pharaoh, and Jezebel. We know that Jesus is THE hero of the Bible and the world would be a better place if we would all just act like him. Many non-Christians agree, from Muhammed to Gandhi to the Dalai Lama and even some published atheists. It's the biblical characters in the gray zone who confuse us. Moses may have been the smartest, most courageous person who ever lived, yet he kept allowing his spirit to be reduced to the petty levels of the people he led. Elisha got mad at some boys for calling him 'bald' and arranged for them to be eaten by a wild bear. Esther's story is inspiring until you include the Jews massacring 75,000 enemies, including women and children. David uplifted millions with his Psalms yet trafficked in murder and adultery. Mary sacrificed her reputation by birthing Jesus but thought he was mentally unstable when he began his ministry and tried to stop him. Paul wrote eloquent definitions of love yet was at times a sexist pig. Peter displayed fierce loyalty one day and cowardice the next.

But no one in the Bible was more screwed up than Samson. If he were in the Wizard of Oz, he could have played both the scarecrow and the tin man, for he demonstrated neither a heart nor a brain. But he did have strength that was guaranteed as long as no one cut his hair, considered a gift from heaven and a well-kept secret. He would argue with the Philistines, terrorize them and singlehandedly slaughter those who resisted him. His girlfriend, Delilah, was in cahoots with the Philistines and she used her wiles to learn the secrets of Samson's strength from him. He finally spilled the beans to her: "Cut my locks and I will be weak." As soon as he fell asleep, she got a barber to give him a buzz cut. Then the Philistines rushed in, tied him up, gouged out his eyes and took him prisoner in Gaza. They kept him chained up, using him for entertainment when they held large parties. As time passed, Samson realized that his hair had grown back just enough that he could push over the pillars that supported the building. At the next party he did just that, killing everyone, including himself. But even after this act of violence, the Philistines remained in control.

Sadly, Gaza and the region around it is still the scene of violence and terrorism. The curse of Samson gets recycled from one generation to another. His solutions were violence and death and his

understanding of different cultures and religions, along with his empathy, was non-existent. It doesn't matter whether we are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Palestinians, or part of Hamas – in the eyes of God we are all sinners. Perhaps the best way to not be a Samson is to learn the critical pieces of history that are behind much of the conflict. What follows is a summary of them.

Israel collapsed because of its idolatry and disobedience to God. Soon the term Judaism came to be associated with the emerging culture. Then among the Jewish people, a new religion arose: Christianity. The early Christians kept some of their Jewishness and rejected parts of it. They adopted the concept of 'Israel' as a chosen people for themselves, seeing it in aspirational terms and rejecting it as a political or military movement. By the 8th century AD, Arabic speaking Muslims had conquered the Holy Land and established Islam as the dominant religion. At first the Muslims protected Christians and Jews, recognizing the things they all had in common and respecting them as 'people of the book.' As time passed, militarized and uncompromising factions in both Christianity and Islam promoted religious intolerance, mostly against the Jews, but also each other. Crusades were organized by Christians to drive the Muslims out of the Holy Land, but they failed to do so. Then Spain, the place where the three religions has their healthiest relationships, turned strongly Christian and through the Spanish Inquisition, arrested, tortured and killed converts whose faith was thought to still be tainted by Islam or Judaism. By 1200 A.D., radical elements in Christianity and Islam made it punishable by death to profess anything other than the official religion of whatever local government was in charge. From the 16th through the 20th centuries, the Islamic Turkish Ottomans ruled the Holy Land. Christians and Jews, now both minority religions, were tolerated there as long as they didn't cause trouble. The population was overwhelmingly Arabic speaking Palestinians. They were divided among the three religious traditions. As the empire weakened, the Jewish population grew through immigration from other parts of the world with the hope of establishing a modern secular nation of Israel.

In the 1800's, Jews were struggling to have their own homeland. Some Christians began taking biblical verses out of context and using them to fabricate a scenario called the Rapture. This word is never mentioned in the Bible. Using verses from the book of Revelation, the theory said that as soon as Israel reclaimed territory in the Holy Land, all of the armies of the world would meet there for a final battle, called Armageddon. Anyone who has not converted to Christianity by then will go to hell and all of the Christians will be taken into Heaven in a 'rapture' to be with Christ for eternity. For these believers, it became critical for the nation of Israel to be established and maintained.

Then along came World War I, with Britian, France and the U.S. squaring off against Germany, the Ottoman Empire and others. All parties tried to get the Jews and Palestinians to help their side. Britian promised both groups their independence and ownership of the land. But promising the same land to two different groups was not wise. Then came World War II. At its end, six million Jews had been killed in what is now called the Holocaust, which in ancient Greek means 'burnt offering'. Hitler was not the first one nor the last to try and exterminate the Jews. In 1948, the U.S. and the newly established United Nations granted territory in the Holy Land to the Jews. A parcel of land roughly the size of New Jersey was taken away from the Palestinians and proclaimed the new nation of Israel. Within 3 years, three quarters of a million Jews settled there. Land equal to the size of Delaware was set aside for the 1.5 million Palestinians who already lived there. Half of them were required to leave their homes and settle in refugee camps in either the West Bank of the Jordan River, or on a piece of land called the Gaza Strip, a 25 by 5 mile piece of land between Israel and Egypt. This meant that Israel, with less people, was granted 75% of the land and Palestine, with almost twice as many people, was granted 25% of the land.

Once established, Israel was immediately attacked by surrounding Arabic nations, none of which wanted to take in the exiled Palestinians. Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia eventually established peace treaties with Israel. Other nations, including Iran and Syria, continue to have hostile relationships with Israel. And no nation except Jordan has agreed to help resettle displaced Palestinians. Over the past 40 years Israel has expanded its control over all Palestinian territories by establishing 144 Jewish settlements, with more than half a million Jews currently living in them. The Israeli military controls the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and has built walls around the people who live there. Unfortunately, the Palestinian response has been disorganized and ineffective, and the rest of the world has been ignored when expressing concern for them. Today, about 7 million Israelis and 7 million Palestinians live the Holy Land. As both sides hardened and became more militant and more violent, the situation spiraled out of control. In the Gaza Strip, where almost 2 million Palestinians refugees live, the political organization of Hamas took control of the government in 2007. Hamas believes in the extermination of Israel and uses terrorist tactics to kill as many Jews as possible. The Israeli government has become increasingly hardline in its approach and use of violence. And then the Oct. 7th attack by Hamas on Israel happened. In response, Israel declared war on Hamas. And the loss of innocent lives and destruction continues.

As people of faith, we strive to not lose heart. Most people in the world have the luxury of NOT being in the Gaza Strip or the nation of Israel. It is difficult to read any news report and feel as if it is not propaganda for one side or the other. We can seek accurate information, as we pray and keep open minds and hearts. We can urge our political and religious leaders to work for peace and a just ending to the conflict.

DECEMBER FEATURES

➤ Update on UMC Church Disaffiliations in the United States

Almost 6,800 churches have officially followed the process to leave the UMC. That represents about 22% of U.S. congregations departing the denomination since the church law took effect in 2019. About 15 of the 53 annual conferences in the U.S. have scheduled special sessions prior to Dec. 31 to allow for more disaffiliations. Five U.S. Bishops have left the UMC to join the denomination that launched in May of 2021, called the Global Methodist Church. In our Susquehanna Conference, approximately 150 churches have disaffiliated so far. Many, but not all, churches are joining the new denomination. Some churches are now independent from any denomination. The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, a research center out of the UMC-affiliated Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C., finds 70% of disaffiliated churches are in the south.

➤ Advent and Christmas

Summary: Advent is a four-week season of preparation for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ. The prominence of Christmas in American culture has led to the popularization of Christmas carols, the figure of Santa Claus, and the practice of exchanging gifts. Traditions particular to certain expressions of Christianity, such as the Mexican posada, preserve other distinctly religious forms of celebrating Christmas.

The Christian year begins in late November or early December, with the four-week season of preparation known as Advent. For Christians, the weeks leading up to Christmas are not simply the crescendo of holiday excitement that has come to typify the Christmas season in America. More importantly, this season of watchfulness and expectation is meant to prepare the heart to celebrate Jesus' birth some 2,000 years ago, the "advent" of Christ.

In many churches and Christian homes, the period of preparation is kept by the weekly lighting of Advent candles that symbolize hope, peace, joy, and love. One candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent, two on the second, three on the third. On the fourth Sunday of Advent, just before Christmas, all four candles are lit. The lighting of candles draws upon ancient traditions of kindling fires during the winter solstice, the darkest time of the year. Since the 4th century, Christians set the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25, the time of the Roman celebration of the "Sol Invictus," the "Unconquered Sun," during the winter solstice when days began to lengthen once again. Because of differences in the Gregorian and Julian calendars, however, most Orthodox Christians today celebrate Christmas on January 7.

From its earliest days, the Christian tradition has spoken of Christ as the "Light of the World." For Christians, the candles and lights of the season symbolize the light that has come into the world through Christ. One Christmas hymn begins, "Break forth, O beautiful, heavenly Light, and usher in the morning!" The Christmas lights of today, decking trees, homes, and public buildings, might be seen as a modern transformation of the ancient symbolism of light.

Christmas in America is an amalgam of many distinct traditions, all of which have combined and evolved to create the celebration familiar today. In the 19th century, the custom of New Year's gift-giving was redirected toward Christmas, as new German immigrants brought with them the traditions of the Christmas tree and Christmas gifts. In 1823, Clement Moore's poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas" entered the repertory as a way of observing Christmas Eve. By the late 19th century, the European St. Nicholas had been transformed, through myth and commerce, into the full-fledged Santa Claus—jolly, bountiful, and distinctly American. The commercialization of Christmas in America began in the 19th century and continues full-force today.

The 19th century Americanization of Christmas also produced many of today's most popular carols, such as "O Little Town of Bethlehem," written by Phillips Brooks in 1868. Today, throughout the Christmas season, the repetition of the story of Christ's birth is sung in carols, told in narratives, and enacted in dramas. That story is recreated in homes, churches, and parks, with the "nativity scene," also called a crèche or a nacimiento. Countless churches present Christmas pageants, where church members take on the roles of Mary and Joseph seeking room in the inn and finding space in the stable instead. The congregation, children included, become the shepherds and angels, and the wise men who saw the star from afar and came bearing gifts.

Hispanic Americans, like immigrants before them, have brought their own traditions of Christmas to America. Among them is the Mexican tradition called the posada, which means "inn." For nine nights, the community follows Mary and Joseph through the streets as they look for room in the inn, stopping at one house after another, singing "In the name of heaven, I beg you for lodging, for my beloved wife cannot walk." In one place after another, the innkeeper responds, singing, "This is not an inn, so keep on going. I cannot open. You may be bad people." In such cities as Dallas, Texas, and Fullerton, California, the pilgrims sing their parts. After a long journey through the streets, participants find shelter in a church or community hall, and celebrate with hot chocolate, Mexican sweetbreads, and the breaking of a piñata filled with candies.

Along the Mexican-U.S. border in San Ysidro, California, the ritual drama of the Christmas posada has taken a powerful new turn. There, at night, across the fences of the border and under the floodlights of the Border Patrol, groups of Christians gather on both sides of the border, bearing

images of Mary, Joseph, and the innkeeper. Joseph sings from the Mexican side, “Don’t be inhuman. Have mercy on us.

The God of Heaven will reward you for it.” The U.S. delegation, dramatizing the innkeeper, sings, “This is not an inn, so keep going. I cannot open. You may be bad people.” From both sides of the border, they release doves who fly free. As these Christians hold candles in the night air, they speak of the significance of the birth of Christ for this particular historical context. As one American participant explains, “We cannot welcome Christ and reject the poor or the alien.”

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➤ **Where Did The Use of Acolytes Originate?**

The word acolyte comes from the Greek word *akolouthos*, meaning follower, helper, or assistant. By the middle ages, acolytes were a clerical order. Acolytes may have any number of helping functions. They may carry the light, processional cross, banners, or Bible. They may also assist the pastor or other worship leaders with communion, baptism and other duties. Children and youth often serve as acolytes, but adults may serve as well.

“Jesus said: ‘I am the light of the world’” (John 8:12 NRSV). The presence of the light reminds us of Jesus coming into our world and into our lives. The light is carried into the worship service as a symbol of Jesus coming into the presence of the worshipping community.

Many congregations use two candles on the Lord's table. While the original use of such candles was simply to provide enough light for the presider to see the communion liturgy well enough to pray it, some also came to see those two candles as a reminder of the dual nature of Jesus, both human and divine. At the end of the service, the light carried out into the world is a sign that Jesus Christ is for all people everywhere, and that Christ goes with his people into the world where serve as his living body.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

BEAVER MINISTRIES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Beacon Free Shop

Beacon Free Shop was held Saturday, November 18, and provided personal hygiene products to 94 households. 245 individuals make up these households. Once again, these numbers are a new record of number served since the inception of the Beacon Shop. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of these households were new to Beacon.

In order to continue this program, we must either 1.) decrease the number of items given to Beacon clients, or 2.) increase our financial resources. We are investigating both options, while continuing to be good stewards of generous financial and inventory gifts bestowed to Beacon.

On Thursday, November 16, 2023, a group of Beacon representatives visited AGAPE Love From Above To Our Community, Bloomsburg, to tour their warehouse and discuss possible partnership. AGAPE staff shared their expertise regarding how to secure inventory and financial resources.



Thanks to Pastor Sue for knitting scarves for many of our Beacon clients. They were gobbled up quickly and will keep many warm this winter.

Thanks to the volunteers this month who worked hard to serve this number of people in less than two hours. We couldn't do this without each of you!

For additional information contact Christy Brouse at 570-238-5707 or beacon@beavermethodist.org.

New To You Free Shop

We had a second successful day at our New To You Free Shop. We had 84 individuals/families come through. The household members they represented totaled 222! Once again, linens were very popular, especially towels this time. We do need to stress that we accept only adult clothing, linens and kitchen items. Many volunteers made the rather formidable task of putting everything out on Friday afternoon and putting the remaining items back in storage on Saturday afternoon go quickly and efficiently. Jerry Myers took items that had not been selected at either of our events to Goodwill. Thanks Jerry!

Our next event will be February 17 with set up on the 16th. We always welcome new volunteers. Feel free to call Patty Johnston at 570-523-3132 or email hoodj1973@ptd.net. Our sign-up sheet will appear on the table in the sanctuary in mid-January.

United Youth Group

There have been a few changes to the December plans. Here are the correct things you need to know for the rest of 2023:

- November 26 - No youth group - enjoy the rest of your Thanksgiving break!
- December 3 - Movie Night at St, Paul's. 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. We will watch the Polar Express in our Pajamas and have Hot Chocolate and cookies.
- December 10 - Activity to be Led by Stuart and Pastor. Daniel - 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at St. Paul's
- December 17th - Christmas Dinner Party with a gift exchange (\$20.00 limit) at Christ's Lutheran - 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

December 24 and 31 - No Youth Group - Enjoy your Christmas and New Year!

Busy Beaver

Busy Beaver has an exciting month planned for December! We have our 12 days of Christmas coming up for the children and staff. Some of the fun days planned are pajama days, movie days, cookie decorating, and designing a Christmas ornament. Our annual Christmas party is Thursday December 21st. The children will perform a few carols for their families and enjoy some tasty treats!

Our Gertrude Hawk fundraiser was a HUGE success. We are waiting on a final sales amount, but we are anticipating somewhere around \$4,000! This was our best fundraiser yet! Thank you to everyone who ordered!

- Charlene Reigle Director, Busy Beaver

Kinderfolk

The Kinderfolk classes had the wonderful opportunity of donating two "Turkey and Trimming Baskets" to the Office of Civic Engagement at Bucknell to help fight hunger in our area. Our boxes were filled with gift cards and food to provide two families in our area with a holiday meal this

November. The children and families jumped at the opportunity to fill our boxes! We are very grateful for the donations our families provided for the event.

We are now very excited to celebrate the December holidays! The month of December is filled with crafts and projects that not only celebrate Christmas, but that will acknowledge so many other holidays. The children will be introduced to holidays such as St. Lucia Day, Hanukkah, St. Nicholas Day, Las Posadas, Kwanzaa and the Winter Solstice. We are also very excited that we will be having our annual Holiday Party on December 20th with the children and families of Kinderfolk.

- Julia Umstead Director, Kinderfolk Preschool

Altar Flowers

If you enjoy the beautiful flowers displayed on the altar each Sunday, please consider signing up to sponsor altar flowers. You can use the signup sheet on the cabinet in the narthex entry way or contact the church office for available dates. The cost is \$45 for two vases.

DIG Furniture Bank

DIG, one of Beaver's supported community missions, restores dignity and promotes stability by redirecting used furniture and household items to local families in need at no cost. DIG helps people get back on their feet after homelessness, incarceration, domestic violence and other significant life changes. DIG is located at 14 Elm Street, Milton. Their phone number is 570.658-9880. Their web address is WWW.DIGFB.ORG and email address is INFO@DIGFB.ORG.

Union County Giving Closet

This ministry being housed at First Presbyterian Church, provides new and gently used clothing for children aged newborn through Grade 12, whose families are enrolled in the Eastern Union County Food Bank Program. They are looking for monetary contributions and donations of clothing/shoes/reusable bags/gift cards to local stores and also need volunteers. You can email them at ucgivingcloset@gmail.com or call 570-524-4419.

Eat Share Program

The mission of this program is to extend kindness through food sharing. The focus is on neighbors providing warm meals to members of the community who cannot do that for various reasons. No proof of need is required to request or receive a meal. You can sign up to volunteer to cook and/or deliver meals. You can also donate to help provide ingredient/food purchases. Contact them at eatsharelove@yahoo.com or call 570-971-8831.

Join Our Tech Team!

If you would be willing to learn how to use the cameras on Sunday mornings, please let one of the tech team (Nick Persing, Todd Fogle, Deena Eberhart or Tim Taylor) know. They will train you and promise it is not difficult. Help us keep connected with those who are not able to join us in person on Sunday mornings.

Musicians/Vocalists Wanted!

If you would be willing to provide special music on occasion for Sunday worship, please let Brooke Persing know. We want to have a nice variety: vocal, instrumental, and combinations of those – we know there is talent among us. *We are also looking for additional vocal and bell choir members! Beaver Bells rehearsal is held on Thursdays at 6:00 PM in the sanctuary. Vocal Choir rehearsals are held on Thursdays at 7:00PM in the Choir Room on the lower level.*

We Have Convenient Methods of Giving!

Mail to Beaver Memorial at 42 S. 3rd St. Lewisburg, 17837
 drop into our Drop Box outside the office door or
 go to our website: www.beavermethodist.org and click on "Giving".
 Thank you!

EVENTS

AT BEAVER MEMORIAL UMC			
Event	Day/Date	Time	Location
New Beginnings Adult Sunday School	Sunday	9:00 AM	Parsonage
NA Meeting	Monday	7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall
NA Meeting	Wednesday	7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
Leadership Team Meetings	3 rd Tuesday of the month	6:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
AA Meeting	Saturday	7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall
Beacon Shop	3 rd Saturday of the month	10:00 AM	Beaver Memorial UMC
IN THE COMMUNITY			
Event	Day/Date	Time	Location
Pub Theology	3 rd Thursday of the month	6:00 PM	Bull Run Tap House

BMUMC Staff includes:

Position	Individual	Position	Individual
Church Administrator	Teresa Rothermel	Treasurer	Shirley Brough
Custodian	Jim Gulden	Youth Group Director	Charlene Rineer
Choir Director	Brooke Persing	Pianist	Ryan Hill
Busy Beaver Day Care Director	Charlene Reigle	Kinderfolk Preschool Director	Julia Umstead
Video Team	Nick Persing, Todd Fogle, Deena Eberhart, Timothy Taylor		
Leadership Team	Martha Root - croot@bucknell.edu Rev. Sue Jamison - sjamison@susumc.org Ralph Hibbs - rhibbs@windstream.net Patty Johnston - hoodj1973@ptd.net David Deibler-Gorman - dgorman@windstream.net Gabrielle Taylor – taylorfamily@ptd.net Heidi Gilmore – heidicgilmore@gmail.com Kathy McKibben – klmckibben@gmail.com Krystie Byrum – professorprmaven@gmail.com Chuck Root – croot@bucknell.edu Nick Persing – persing191983@gmail.com Travis Curry – travise Curry@yahoo.com		

➤ Submit content for the newsletter to tlcinhisservice@yahoo.com by the 18th of the month prior to the newsletter.